How to Be Sane GREGG EASTERBROOK

Marc Rich, Jewish Hero
Leon Wieseltier

Bill Clinton, Political Pariah
The Editors

THE NEW REPUBLIC

MARCH 5, 2001

Blacks On TV

Why George Jefferson Understood Race in America Better Than Kweisi Mfume

By JOHN MCWHORTER

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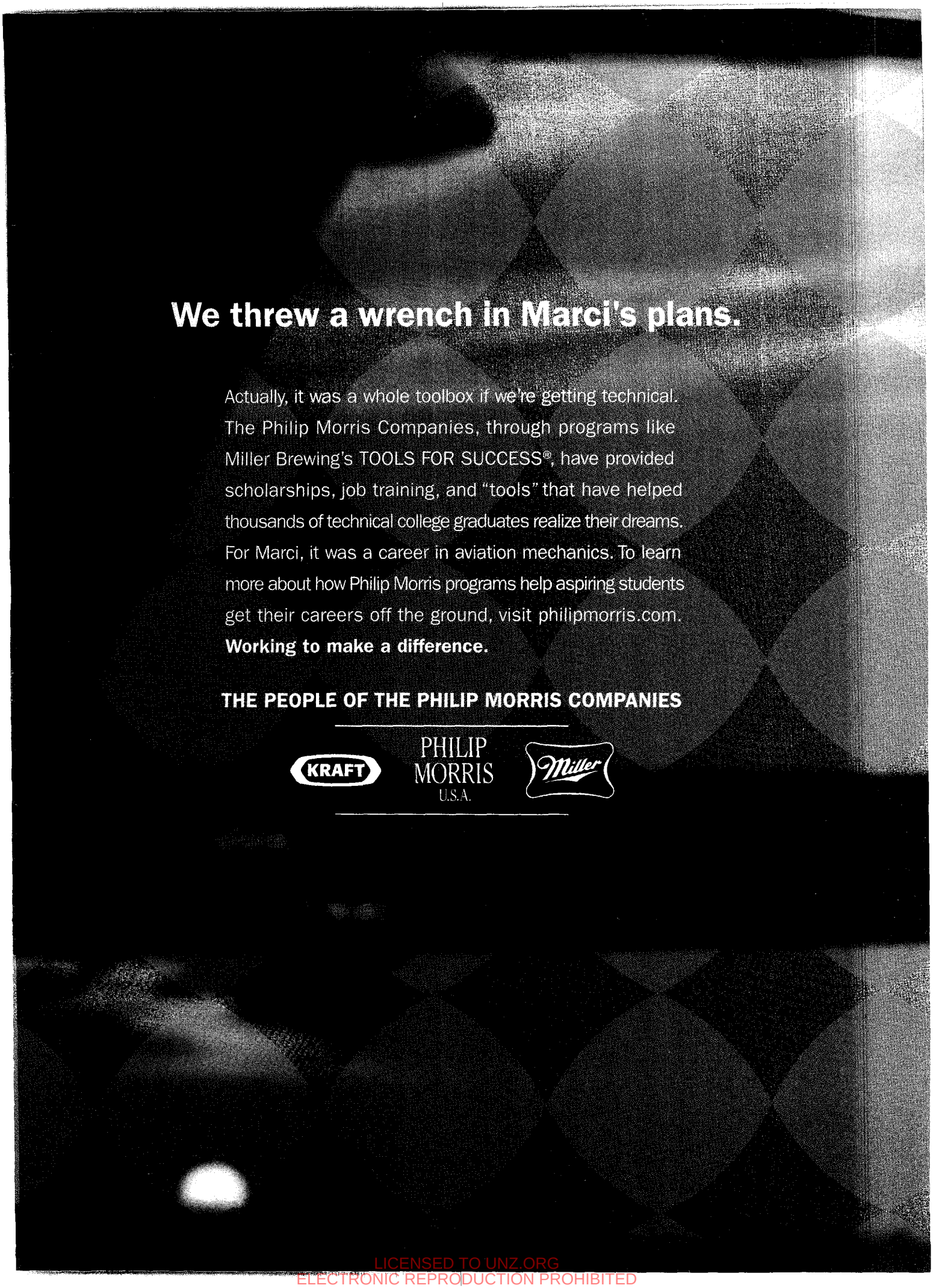
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THE NEW REPUBLIC

A Journal of Politics and the Arts

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CORRESPONDENCE

Brave new world

TO THE EDITORS:

Though I am touched by Tevi Troy's encomium to his tolerant master, John Ashcroft, I must point out Troy's faulty history ("My Boss the Fanatic," January 29). Troy writes that because seventeenth-century English Puritans "knew that their observances made them objects of scorn in the old world, they helped create a new world that demanded religious toleration, even for religious beliefs that they themselves rejected." Puritans helped create no such thing. They colonized North America in order to establish a purified church of the saved, and they were quite willing to banish or even execute religious dissenters. Roger Williams and Anne Hutchinson are well-known victims of Puritan intolerance. But Puritans also executed Quakers and "witches," banned Catholics from their midst, and persecuted Anglicans when they could get away with it. Meanwhile, Puritans outlawed theater, sensuous poetry, and the observance of Christmas (considered pagan). And as to the Puritans' treatment of American Indians, um, let's not go there.

DANIEL HERMAN
Assistant Professor of History
Central Washington University
Ellensburg, Washington

Fourth priority

TO THE EDITORS:

The simple fact that John Ashcroft expresses reticence about federal government surveillance of the Internet is not reason to conclude that his views on "privacy" represent a "ray of sunlight," as Jeffrey Rosen seems to suggest ("Power to Judge," January 29). The more important question has to do with Ashcroft's views on the Fourth Amendment. Does Ashcroft support the current trend on the Supreme Court toward dismantling protections against unreasonable search and seizure? This kind of inquiry could be much more revealing of Ashcroft's views on privacy.

DAVID PENN
Seattle, Washington

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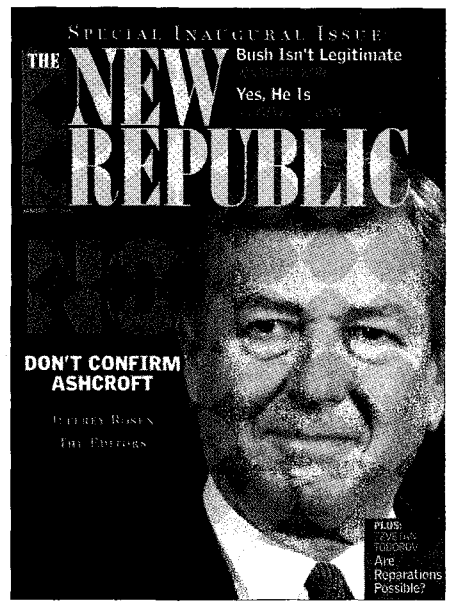

Lab test

TO THE EDITORS:

I want to thank Cass R. Sunstein for his review of Gary L. Francione's book, *Introduction to Animal Rights: Your Child or the Dog?* ("Slaughterhouse Jive," January 29). It was wonderful to see six pages devoted to the welfare and rights of animals. Still, Sunstein seems to believe that we need laboratory experimentation on animals for human health. But most of the experiments performed on animals are so cruel and evil that nothing could justify them. In this day and age, when we have so many alternatives, animal experimentation is uncalled for.

AMY PRIEST
Glen Rock, New Jersey

TO THE EDITORS:

In arguing that humans have a limited right to restrict the movement of animals, Cass R. Sunstein cites prohibitions against vandalism of monuments as an example of how human rights are sometimes overridden. This is a deeply flawed analogy. The precepts of the U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights are not offended by highly qualified governmental restrictions on behaviors such as vandalism. The standard interpretation of human rights, however, does not leave any room for doubt as to whether an innocent individual can be forced to live in captivity or be subjected to horrendously painful experiments. Similarly, the philosophy of animal rights is primarily concerned with the denial of fundamental dignity rights such as life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. This is the central issue—not whether a dog should be permitted to lift his leg on the Washington Monument. Perhaps there is a way to reconcile the atrocities inherent in medical research on living animals, but it is certainly not to be found by way of comparison to relatively benign restrictions of certain human behaviors.

PETER A. BRANDT
Seattle, Washington

Dear irony

TO THE EDITORS:

In his otherwise informative review of Ben Rogers's fine biography of A. J. Ayer ("Ladies, Truth, and Logic," January 29), Simon Blackburn expresses nostalgia for the days before universities instituted sexual harassment policies, saying: "In those olden days wit and intelligence were still aphrodisiacs and few women had discovered that the energetic indulgence of indignation and resentment provides their supreme sexual pleasure." Maybe one should allow this statement to indict itself, but, given THE NEW REPUBLIC's routine scoffing at these policies, I rise to the bait. Having been a philosophy graduate student in those halcyon days, I do not lament their passing. Women who were propositioned by powerful male faculty members (a routine occurrence) found their careers jeopardized and their dignity compromised. Pace Blackburn, valuing one's own dignity does not make one a vindictive sadist. And it was hardly "wit and intelligence," I would say, that turned on all those men who repeatedly sought out powerless and unwilling women.

MARTHA NUSSBAUM
Professor of Philosophy, Law, and Divinity
University of Chicago
Chicago, Illinois

SIMON BLACKBURN REPLIES:

Oh dear, irony is so dangerous. I should have known better. But may I suggest that, just occasionally, one can find a dimension of amusement in where we are now without thereby "expressing nostalgia" for the worst features of where we were before? The plight of the unwilling is not in question, since, as I (and Rogers) carefully pointed out, A. J. Ayer's women friends seem not to have felt damaged or compromised by their evidently willing association with him. In fact, I find myself more moralistic than Martha Nussbaum about this, since I think she should name names if, when she was a student at Harvard, faculty members routinely hit on unwilling students and then wrecked their careers. And as for equating valuing your own dignity with being a vindictive sadist, I am quite at a loss, since at no point did I talk about either. ■

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Pregnant Women and their Babies: Drug War Casualties?

Despite overwhelming medical consensus that pregnant drug users should have access to health care, calls for criminalization and separation of mothers from their newborns continue. Punitive approaches that stigmatize pregnant drug users undermine women and children's health, threaten a range of civil rights and liberties, and dangerously expand the war on drugs. Moreover these approaches are based on dangerous myths:

MYTH #1: All Drug-exposed children are seriously damaged at birth.

FACT: Women who can't abstain completely from drugs, can give birth to healthy children especially if they have access to prenatal care.[1] While some newborns do experience adverse short or long-term consequences from a variety of legal and illegal substances, the sensational news reports about crack that fueled the call for criminalization have not been substantiated. Research has found that crack-exposed children are not doomed to suffer permanent mental or physical impairment,[2] and that whatever effects may exist are greatly overshadowed by poverty's impact on brain development.[3]

MYTH #2: Women who use drugs can simply stop.

FACT: Sudden withdrawal from some drugs can be dangerous to the woman and her pregnancy.[4] Moreover, because addiction is a chronic relapsing condition, it is unrealistic to expect anyone to overcome a drug problem instantaneously or without support. The success and cost-effectiveness of drug treatment is well documented but there is a severe lack of appropriate treatment for women.[5]

MYTH #3: Threatening pregnant women who use drugs with criminal penalties or loss of custody protects their children.

FACT: There is overwhelming medical and public health agreement that punitive approaches will not work because they deter women from seeking prenatal care and drug treatment and undermine the trust essential to the healthcare provider-patient relationship.[6] Calls for punishment unfairly stigmatize both women and children and distract from the real issue: lack of commitment to meaningful drug treatment and reproductive health care for women in this country.

Expectant Mothers Deserve Compassionate Health Care - Not Prison!

1 Andrew Racine et. al., *The Ass'n Between Prenatal Care and Birth Weight Among Women Exposed to Cocaine in New York City*, 270 JAMA 1581, 1585-86 (1993).
2 Deborah A. Frank *et al., Maternal Cocaine Use: Impact on Child Health and Development*, 40 Advances in Pediatrics 65, 92 (1993).("[t]o date no hypothesized or demonstrated effect of in utero-cocaine exposure has been found to be specific to that drug. No studies have shown that prenatal cocaine exposure causes unique developmental dysfunction." See also, Linda C. Mayes et al., *The Problem of Prenatal Cocaine Exposure: A Rush to Judgment*, 267 JAMA 406 (1992).
3 Hallam Hurt et al., *Problem-Solving Ability of Inner-City Children With and Without In Utero Cocaine Exposure*, 20 Dev. & Beh. Pediatrics 418 (Dec. 1999).
4 See Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, Pregnant, Substance-Using Women 6 (1993) (U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Servs.Publication No. (SMA) 93-1998), 19, 26.
5 Id.; Charles Marwick, *Physician Leadership on National Drug Policy Finds Addiction Treatment Works*, 279 JAMA 1149 (1998); Drug Strategies, *Keeping Score, Women And Drugs: Looking at the Federal Drug Control Budget* 16-17 (1998); Vicki Breitbart et al., *The Accessibility of Drug Treatment for Pregnant Women: A Survey of Programs in Five Cities*, 84 Am. J. Pub. Health 1658 (1994).
6 American Academy of Pediatrics, Committee on Substance Abuse, *Drug Exposed Infants*, 86 PEDIATRICS 639, 641 (1990); American Medical Association Board of Trustees, *Legal Interventions During Pregnancy*, 264 JAMA 2663, 2667 (1990); March of Dimes, Statement on Maternal Drug Abuse (1990): Center for the Future of Children, *Recommendations*, in The Future of Children 8 (Richard F. Behrman ed., 1991).

For more information on pregnant women and drugs contact:
National Advocates for Pregnant Women *www.NAPW.Net * NAPW1@aol.com* or
Common Sense for Drug Policy at *www.csdp.org, info@csdp.org*, 703-354-9050, Kevin B. Zeese, President

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TRB

FROM WASHINGTON

Fine Lines

THE MOST FRUSTRATING part of the interminable debate about the "war on drugs" is the word "drugs." Strictly speaking, after all, there is no war on drugs in this country; there is a war on *some* drugs. America boasts a vast legitimate pharmaceutical industry, and personal expenditures on its products go up every year. Very, very few of us go even a week without taking some kind of drug, be it an over-the-counter cold medicine, a doctor-prescribed medication, or a self-medicated legal substance—a cigarette, a shot of tequila, a double espresso, a McFlurry. And the variety and sophistication of these substances are growing as fast as their use. Do you remember the day when you could simply ask for a cup of coffee and no further elaboration was required?

The salient question behind the "drug" war, then, is not simply the usual libertarian-authoritarian conundrum. It's much simpler: What is the criterion that makes one drug the object of a "war" in which millions are incarcerated for illegal use and another drug the object of a vast marketing machine through which millions are regularly sold to and hooked?

The more you think about the question, the more elusive the answer becomes. Once upon a time, medicine was relatively unsophisticated. The few medicinal drugs there were saved lives or cured obvious debilitating illnesses; the few recreational drugs there were gave people pleasure or excitement or oblivion and were regulated on an ad hoc but vaguely sane basis. In a puritanical culture, drugs that were extremely pleasurable, physically harmful, and highly addictive—opium, cocaine, heroin—were banned. Drugs that were mildly pleasurable, slightly unhealthy, and less addictive—caffeine, nicotine, alcohol—were milked for profit and tax revenues. Few pretended this scheme was entirely coherent—permitting addictive, destructive booze while banning nonaddictive, benign pot made no real sense—but it seemed a practical balance between the right to personal pleasure and the need for social calm. The one attempt to be coherent, Prohibition, proved the dangers of consistent logic in social policy.

And then technology had its way. It seems to me that the last decade or so has largely invalidated whatever sanity lay behind this practicable scheme. Our deeper understanding of the chemical effect of even a candy bar has made us think about everything we consume in pharmacological terms. (You can partly thank the Food and Drug Administration's labeling for that.) And our ability to take pharmaceutical substances and alter them in minuscule ways has further blurred the distinction between "good" and "bad" chemicals. The result is a hopelessly contradictory scheme in which fat-drenched hamburgers—partly responsible for heart disease, our leading cause of death—are celebrated, while marijuana, consumed with little harm by millions, is stigmatized to the point of incarceration.

And these are the easy cases. Further up the chemical-sophistication ladder, the ironies only multiply. Take the designer drug Ecstasy. "E" is now classed in the same group of illegal drugs as heroin. But as recently as the 1980s it was completely legal; Merck patented it in 1914. E works by flooding the brain for a few hours with serotonin, the "happy" chemical, a substance our body naturally produces but in much smaller and more consistent amounts. Now compare Prozac. Prozac and its sister and successor drugs help regulate the production of serotonin for people with suppressed or unstable serotonin levels. The effect of such drugs is far less intense than that of Ecstasy—and the method by which serotonin is released and moderated is far subtler. But the substance being manipulated is the same. Indeed, people who regularly take Prozac tend to find that E barely affects their mood at all. Their serotonin problem is already fixed.

Yes, there are differences in degree here, and some in kind. Long-term, persistent use of Ecstasy has been correlated with depression. But long-term use of Prozac may affect the structural composition of the brain as well. Neither is clearly dangerous unless taken in massive doses. Both are designed to make people "happier." What rationale is there in making one drug illegal and marketing the other to literally millions every year?

Similarly, Starbucks profits by marketing coffee, a legal substance that addictively wires people for hours on end. Health-food stores sell stronger versions of speed in the form of pills and even chocolate. There are no laws preventing anyone from drinking ten double espressos or downing several packets of No-Dōz. But one sniff of a much more concentrated methamphetamine—which might actually be less damaging to your body—can land you in jail. Similarly, you can get a dose of Xanax from your doctor and feel extremely mellow within half an hour; or you can take two puffs of pot and be a felon. Likewise, you can buy a drug from a vitamin store—androstenedione—to boost your own production of testosterone, or you can get a packet of testosterone gel on the black market (as thousands of teenage jocks do) and risk a criminal record. A growing number of "medicinal" drugs also have high "recreational" street value: painkillers like Vicodin, downers like Valium, uppers like Ritalin, and anesthetics like Ketamine.

My point is not that there is no sense at all in these distinctions. Clearly, crystal meth is more potent, more addictive, and easier to take than ten triple espressos. Clearly, excessive steroid use can wreck people's livers in ways that even massive use of legal androstenedione won't. But we're dealing here with degree as much as kind. And as the sophistication of pharmaceuticals develops exponentially each year, the lines we draw between legal and illegal, between stigmatized and accepted, will become more and more arbitrary.

In exactly the same way, the very definition of "health" is up for grabs. Do most people take Prozac for their mental health or their sense of well-being? Is there a moral difference between taking Xanax to get some sleep and smoking a joint? If someone wants to take modest amounts of anabolic steroids to look good and feel sexy, why should that be illegal when a legal, multibillion-dollar industry is aimed at achieving the same effects with the stone-age technology of swallowing creatine, eating steak, and pushing pieces of iron up and down? Similarly, human growth hormone was developed to accelerate the growth of stunted children. It's now popular among retiring baby-boomers who enjoy its rejuvenating effects on their bodies and minds. But the boomers often have to fake weight loss and impotence to get it legally. Why shouldn't retirees have access to it—not because they have an actual physical ailment but because they want to enjoy to the fullest what's left of their lives? Isn't aging the ultimate physical ailment?

I wish I knew the answer to these questions; to me they seem the ones we need to confront. The war on soft drugs is built on such logical sand that it cannot be sustained forever—just as the once-clear distinction between health and pleasure is now disintegrating, and only our residual cultural puritanism is propping it up. In a country dedicated to the pursuit of happiness, where happiness is reducible to a chemical, surely the "war on drugs" will not be the only casualty of this development.

ANDREW SULLIVAN

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Unpardoned

ON HIS LAST night in office, President Clinton pardoned billionaire fugitive Marc Rich. In the month or so since, Clinton has been denounced by virtually every political commentator. Liberal editorial pages have berated him; Democrats politicians have insulted him; even former Commerce Secretary William Daley has gotten into the act. *Time* magazine's cover this week: "THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING EX-PRESIDENT."

And still the Republicans scream that he's gotten away with it. They're proposing a raft of legal remedies—hearings, criminal investigations, a second impeachment. Makes you wonder whether they've learned anything more from the past eight years than our esteemed former president has.

He hasn't gotten away with it. Bill Clinton did something shameless, and he's being punished the way our political system is supposed to punish shameless politicians: *politically*. A president obsessed with his legacy is watching his two-year post-Lewinsky effort to erase the stain of scandal come to nothing. And a still-young politician, who took pains to place allies (like Terry McAuliffe) in high places in hopes of returning to public life, has given comfort to his enemies, hobbled his wife politically, and made it less likely he'll be elected or appointed to anything ever again.

The system is working. There's nothing wrong with the presidential power to pardon—it's a valuable safety valve for cases in which judicial abuse or error leads to a miscarriage of justice. The way to keep presidents focused on those cases, and not on their sleazy pals or donors, is to slap them hard when they abuse the power.

In recent history, that's worked pretty well. Gerald Ford's absolution of Richard Nixon created such an enormous backlash—some even think it cost Ford the 1976 election—that the presidents who followed him took extreme care to avoid pardon-related scandals. The Reagan administration instituted guidelines that severely constricted the circumstances under which pardons could be granted. Convicts generally had to wait five years after their sentences ended to be considered. George H.W. Bush granted clemency to a mere 77 supplicants—and even if one of them was crony Caspar Weinberger, then under investigation in connection with the Iran-Contra scandal, by historical standards that still represented extraordinary restraint. (Harry Truman, after all, handed out more than 1,900 pardons, including one to a ballot-box-stuffing party hack.) That it took the 27 years since Watergate—combined with Clinton's particular brand of corrupt entitlement—before we witnessed another major abuse of the pardon power suggests that a little public revulsion goes a long way. Want to bet that the Marc Rich firestorm will make George W. Bush think twice before he pardons any of his big donors?

The only problem with recriminations is that they occur after the fact. Better that presidents take abuse for bad pardons while they're still in office than after they leave. And last year Senator Orrin Hatch designed a package of minor reforms that would virtually ensure that. Hatch's Pardon Attorney Reform and Integrity Act would require that the administration receive opinions on pardon applications from the prosecutors, judges, and probation officers who dealt with the petitioner. It would further mandate that the administration notify the pardon applicant's victims so they too could weigh in on the case. Essentially, the Hatch reforms would bog down applications for pardons in enough bureaucracy and paperwork to make it logistically impossible to issue them in an administration's final hours—when presidents historically have tried to hide the most controversial ones. (The Justice Department's pardon office began searching for information about Rich on the Internet after midnight, hours before his pardon.)

Above all, the Hatch act would allow time to build political opposition to potential pardons. Angry prosecutors and victims would vent their frustrations to the press. Watchdog groups and congressmen would erupt in fury. Whatever motives lay behind the Rich pardon, it's clear that Clinton did not anticipate the anger it would trigger. Had he known in advance, it's hard to imagine he would have gone near Rich—for the same reason he didn't pardon equally well-connected applicants like Jonathan Pollard and Michael Milken, against whom public pressure had already built.

Would the Hatch act prevent all dubious pardons? Of course not. But by subjecting them to public scrutiny before finalization, it could weed out the worst, which is all that is possible under the Constitution anyway. If Congress passed the Hatch act, it would be much less likely that sleazy pardons would pollute our political culture in the years to come. And, in a sense, Clinton's pardon of Rich makes it less likely that he will either. ■

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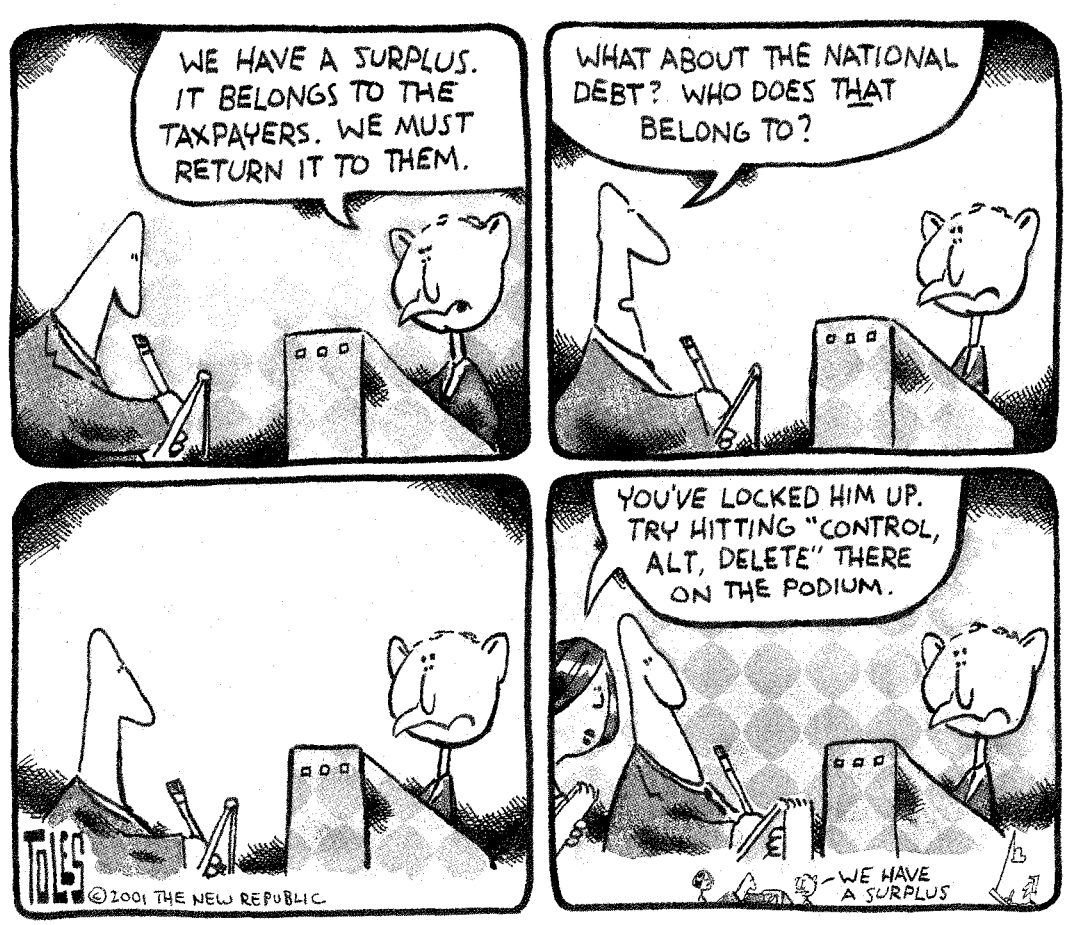
NOTEBOOK

CHARITABLE INTERPRETATION: Last week, President Bush's drive to repeal the estate tax lost momentum when his adviser John DiIulio, along with a coalition of billionaires, came out against it on the grounds that it would reduce charitable giving. Their argument is fairly straightforward: If donations to heirs are taxed but donations to charity are not, as is now the case, then people have an incentive to give more to charity. If you're paying the top estate-tax rate of 55 percent, for instance, you can essentially choose between giving 45 cents to your heirs or giving a dollar to your favorite charity. (The effect is undercut somewhat by the fact that taxing wealthy people less will leave them with more money to give, but studies suggest that the countervailing impact is smaller.) So now Bush and his allies are counterattacking. Abolishing the estate tax won't hurt charities, they argue, because wealthy donors don't take their tax savings into account when they decide whether to give. "Americans aren't charitable only so they can avoid the taxman," argued a *Wall Street Journal* editorial. This is a strange position for Bush supporters to take—especially the supply-siders at the *Journal* editorial page. The entire foundation of the *Journal*'s economic worldview is that people—especially rich people—are hyper-rational utility maximizers, hinging basic life decisions upon their marginal tax rates. That's why supply-siders insist reducing people's taxes inevitably makes them work harder and invest more. So now the *Journal* is arguing that the marginal-rate calculation applies to every realm of human endeavor except charitable giving. Even if this were somehow true, however, Bush's position would still be contradictory: His tax plan also includes a provision to encourage giving by expanding the charitable deduction. So, does Bush think charity can be influenced by financial incentives or doesn't he?

HOME FRONT: Maybe the Bushies are serious about Iraq after all. President Bush described last week's sizable strike against air-defense sites around Baghdad as routine. It wasn't. Nothing like it had been attempted since late 1998, when the Clinton administration undertook a policy review whose whole purpose was, as a National Security Council staffer who participated in the process puts it, "to get Iraq to disappear off the radar screen." As part of that effort, the Clintonites tried to avert military confrontation with Iraq; at one point the Air Force was even reduced to dropping bombs filled with concrete instead of explosives. Now the Bush team is conducting its own Iraq policy review, and many believe last week's air strike offers a preview of more forceful action to come. But, while they're reviewing Iraq policy, the Bushies might want to review the National Security Council staffers making Iraq policy as well; they're holdovers from the Clinton administration. The Bush team has yet to replace NSC staffers Bruce Riedel and Kenneth Pollack, who helped formulate Clinton's feeble Iraq policy and who still show up for work each day. If the Bush administration is serious about getting tough with Saddam, it first needs to get tough with the people who let him off easy.

INAUDIBLE OR UNPRINTABLE?: "Nancy [Reagan] is dis-thrilled [*sic*] with the White House's newest occupant. Not enamored of him, didn't vote for him, and, while everyone gives George W. high marks, she calls him 'The village idiot.' And that's one of her *nicer* names."—Cindy Adams, *New York Post,* February 20

"THE PRESIDENT [GEORGE W. BUSH]: Mrs. Reagan, hi, how are you today?
MRS. REAGAN: (inaudible)


WE HAVE A SURPLUS. IT BELONGS TO THE TAXPAYERS. WE MUST RETURN IT TO THEM.
WHAT ABOUT THE NATIONAL DEBT? WHO DOES THAT BELONG TO?
TOLES ©2001 THE NEW REPUBLIC
YOU'VE LOCKED HIM UP. TRY HITTING "CONTROL, ALT, DELETE" THERE ON THE PODIUM.
WE HAVE A SURPLUS

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THE PRESIDENT: Good, thank you. Listen, I'm honored. I'm here in the Oval Office—
MRS. REAGAN: (inaudible)
THE PRESIDENT: Well, thank you."—transcript of phone conversation between Nancy Reagan and President Bush, released by the White House, February 15

FRANK BRUNI PRESIDENTIAL SUCK-UP WATCH: "Back here [in Crawford, Texas,] for the first time since his inauguration, Mr. Bush seemed to be feeling not just misty but poetic. 'Home is important,' he mused in his remarks. 'It's important to have a home.'"—*The New York Times*, February 19

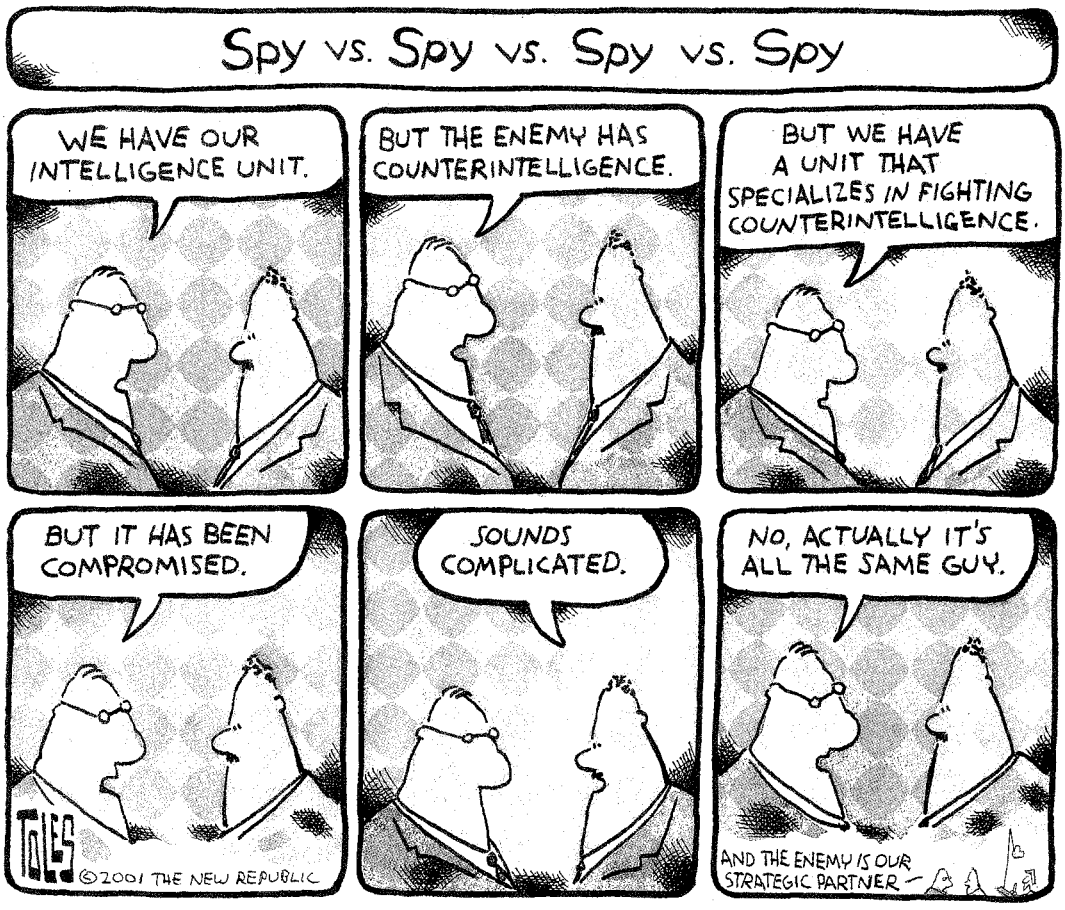
STILL WONDER ABOUT THE IMPACT OF MEDIA VIOLENCE?: "In the British crime caper *Snatch*, Alan Ford's boxing promoter, Brick Top, has a unique way of getting rid of human bodies. He cuts them into six pieces and feeds them to starving pigs.... Even scarier are the massive and hairy wild boars trained to eat people alive in *Hannibal*."—*USA Today*, February 13

"The private news agency Mediafax reported that [Gheorghe] Miscoiu, from the village of Santana, [Romania,] was cleaning out his pigsty when one of the animals knocked him to the ground and several other pigs mauled him. He lost consciousness in the attack."—Associated Press, February 20

THE CASE FOR UNIVERSAL TESTING: "You teach a child to read and he or her will be able to pass a literacy test."—President Bush, February 21

HOW MANY OTHER GOVERNMENT WORKERS ARE SECRETLY DOING THEIR JOBS?: "FBI COUNTERSPY ACCUSED OF ESPIONAGE"—*The Washington Post*, February 21

MAYBE HE THINKS THE TAX CUT WILL SPUR ZAMBIA'S ECONOMY TOO: All of a sudden, the Bush administration cares about Africa. Secretary of State Colin Powell held early meetings with the leaders of Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo; he's identified the global spread of AIDS as a top foreign policy priority; and he recently told ABC News that "[w]e cannot ignore any place in the world, and Africa is a huge continent in great need." But, then again, the members of the 39.6 percent tax bracket are also in great need. And so, to find the money for their tax cut, the Bushies last week suggested cutting by one-quarter the funding for the Export-Import Bank, which gives loans to individuals in developing nations so they can buy U.S. goods to build their infrastructure. The aid goes to dirt-poor democracies—like Nigeria, Tanzania, and Mozambique—struggling to achieve sufficient economic and social development so they don't collapse into anarchy like their neighbors. If they do collapse, President Bush almost certainly won't lift a finger. Is it too much to ask that he trim his fat-cat tax cut so that maybe we don't have to find out?


Spy vs. Spy vs. Spy vs. Spy
WE HAVE OUR INTELLIGENCE UNIT.
BUT THE ENEMY HAS COUNTERINTELLIGENCE.
BUT WE HAVE A UNIT THAT SPECIALIZES IN FIGHTING COUNTERINTELLIGENCE.
BUT IT HAS BEEN COMPROMISED.
SOUNDS COMPLICATED.
NO, ACTUALLY IT'S ALL THE SAME GUY.
AND THE ENEMY IS OUR STRATEGIC PARTNER
TOLES
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DEPARTMENT OF SELF-PARODY: "Sally Quinn is ... right now pitching a one-hour pilot, called *Georgetown*.... The show aims to demonstrate that *The West Wing* badly overstates the power that supposedly resides in the White House. 'Look at the election crisis,' Quinn tells me.... 'More and more, the real decision-making is done by people getting together behind closed doors in places like Georgetown. That's the power structure.'"—*New York Post*, February 21 ■

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Mooresville Dispatch

Race Matters

By JASON ZENGERLE

"WHEN THE ULTIMATE race fan died, he woke up at a speedway in the clouds," begins the tale on the back of the woman's shirt. "It was the most beautiful track he had ever seen.... 'Wow! This must be Heaven!' the fan thought to himself. Just then he saw a black and silver 3 flash by and he watched as the car went deeper into turn one than anybody else. 'Oh, no!' exclaimed the fan. 'When did this happen?' 'Don't worry,' Saint Peter assured him. 'Dale isn't here yet. That's God. He just likes to think he's Dale Earnhardt.'"

Now it has happened. Last Sunday, the 49-year-old Earnhardt, probably the greatest driver in NASCAR history, was killed in a crash on the final lap of the Daytona 500. And the storytelling T-shirt is just one of many pieces of Earnhardt memorabilia on display here in southwestern North Carolina, alongside a normally lonely stretch of two-lane highway that runs in front of the Dale Earnhardt Inc. (DEI) compound. Only hours after the crash, his fans began making the gloomy pilgrimage to the DEI headquarters—a concrete-and-mirrored-glass structure known as the "Garage Mahal." By Monday afternoon, traffic is backed up a half-mile in each direction, and a makeshift shrine has been set up in front of a wrought-iron fence. Mingling with the familiar votive candles, flowers, and handwritten notes are license plates with airbrushed images of Earnhardt, miniature models of his black number-three Chevrolet Monte Carlo, and scores of baseball caps bearing the logo of one of Earnhardt's main sponsors, GM Goodwrench.

The hundreds of anguished fans are almost all dressed in black, not just because they are in mourning but also because that was the color Earnhardt, whose aggressive driving style earned him the nickname "The Intimidator," raced in. Grown men with bellies and beards and ponytails weep as they file past the shrine. "It's like a bad dream," says a tattooed twentysomething named Rob, who flew down this morning from New York to pay his respects. "No one will ever replace him," says Rob's friend Ken, his black GM cap pulled down low over his face. Bobby Atkins, a balding man who stands back from the throng, can barely get the words out in between sobs: "He made the race. He made the race."

The tears in Mooresville are not just for the man but for what he represented. Earnhardt, who dropped out of school in eighth grade to work on race cars, learned the sport from his father, a racer himself who, back in the days when stock cars were the province of moonshiners and outlaws, rode on the small dirt-track circuit in western North Carolina. Like his father and many others of that era, Earnhardt was a tenacious, ruthless driver—bullying, banging, and bumping his way to the front of the pack. "There is no worse sight," went the saying among other NASCAR drivers, "than seeing Dale Earnhardt in your rearview mirror."

But over the years stock-car racing began to change, leaving its roots in the white, Southern, working-class subculture and entering the national mainstream. Indeed, NASCAR is now the fastest-growing spectator sport in America; more than one-quarter of its fans, NASCAR likes to boast, make more than $50,000 per year. And, in going mainstream, NASCAR has tried to sand down some of its rough edges. Aggressive driving has become less common. Racers like Jeff Gordon, a young driver whose clean-cut good looks won him a spot in a milk ad, are favored by the sport's newer fans. Only Earnhardt, it seemed, remained true to his and stock-car racing's roots. An unrepentant redneck—with his bristle-brush mustache, mirrored sunglasses, and penchant for flipping the bird at the drivers he passed on the track—he was the last link to NASCAR's backwoods, outlaw origins. And his fans, who would sit in the racetrack infield and wave flags with Earnhardt's face emblazoned on the Confederate cross, loved him for it. FOR MANY OF US, reads a handwritten sign stuck on the iron fence, YOU WERE NASCAR. YOU WERE THE ONLY REASON WE WATCHED THE RACES.

Earnhardt's fans aren't threatening to walk away from the sport. After all, as Mike Johnson, who has made the 30-mile trip to Mooresville from his home in Concord, solemnly notes, "Dale loved racing so much, he wouldn't want it to die with him." The Intimidator's fans will now focus their adoration on Earnhardt's 26-year-old son Dale Jr., who actually finished second at Daytona on Sunday, behind another of Earnhardt's drivers, Michael Waltrip. But no one pretends that these younger drivers fully capture The Intimidator's spirit. "No one races like Earnhardt anymore," says Johnson. "Back in '73, '74, when he was a rookie, you could bang and bong with each other, but nowadays, with so much money in these cars, they just don't bang like they used to. It's not Saturday night racin' anymore." Dave Madison, another Mooresville pilgrim, can barely contain his anger. "The whiners that didn't like him," Madison practically spits, "didn't like him because of how good he was, because he was a hard-charger, and they couldn't accept the fact that that's how stock-car racing is.... Stock-car racing is Dale Earnhardt."

Not surprisingly, some of the anger over Earnhardt's death is directed at NASCAR. Much of the media focus is now on whether NASCAR should require its drivers to wear a special head and neck-support device that is supposed to protect against the kind of massive head injuries that killed Earnhardt and three other NASCAR drivers in the past year. In Mooresville, though, the Earnhardt fans blame NASCAR not for too little regulation but for too much. To keep the race close and entertaining at this year's Daytona—which was the first race in NASCAR's new $2.8 billion TV contract with Fox and NBC—NASCAR officials added an "aero package" to each car to lower speeds and allow for more passing. While this might seem like a good and sensible thing, it has the dangerous effect of bunching the cars together—and Earnhardt, for one, hated efforts to make the cars go more slowly. "Get the hell home," he once com-

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The Backlash against the Backlash

Diane Ravitch is a research professor, New York University; distinguished visiting fellow, Hoover Institution; and member, Hoover's Koret Task Force on K–12 Education.

In the year 2000, the biggest education story was the alleged "backlash" against standards-based reform. In the well-established tradition of "pack journalism," **the major media warned of a movement growing among parents and educators to curtail testing for promotion or graduation.** Sympathetic reporters told vivid stories about anguished students, distraught parents, and angry teachers who complained that the tests were unfair and that children were suffering because of the stress induced by state tests.

Time for a reality check. Three major surveys in the past eighteen months have shown that this portrait was simply untrue. There are certainly critics of state testing, and there are some state tests that are woefully inadequate and need to be improved. But the fact is that, by decisive numbers, the public, parents, and teachers understand the value of standards-based reform and remain committed to it.

The American Federation of Teachers released a Peter D. Hart survey of public schoolteachers and principals in August 1999. The survey reported that teachers endorse standards-based reform by 73 percent to 19 percent, as do 92 percent of principals. Sixty-six percent of teachers said that the implementation of standards in their schools had had a positive impact, as compared to 15 percent who judged their effect to be negative. Among teachers, the strongest support for standards came from those in urban schools and from black and Hispanic teachers.

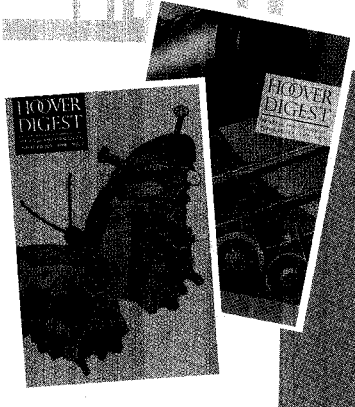
In August 2000, the Business Roundtable released another public opinion survey that showed overwhelming support for standards-based reform among all groups, regardless of race, income, or political party. When asked whether students should be required to pass state tests before graduating from high school "even if they have passing grades in their classes," 65 percent of parents and 70 percent of the general public answered yes. Support was even higher (76 percent of parents and 81 percent of the public) if students were allowed to take the state exam several times, which in fact is the customary policy in most states.

In October 2000, the nonpartisan survey organization Public Agenda released a survey of public school parents, which again demonstrated solid backing for standards and testing. Large majorities of parents in big urban districts say that their local reforms have been carefully and reasonably implemented. Only about 10 percent thought that their children were getting too much homework or taking too many tests. Nearly 80 percent agreed that decisions about promotion should not be based on "just one test."

So, **despite the outpouring of media about a test backlash, it turns out that the public is not opposed to testing** and understands the value of testing for supplying information to parents and incentives to students. Parents want to know if their children are making progress. They don't want everything to ride on a single test, and they do want assurance that their children will get extra help if they need it. In this instance, parents show more common sense than the media who write about education. And, lest we forget, the public schools belong to the public.

— Diane Ravitch

Paid for by the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.



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plained about drivers who wanted to keep speeds down. "Don't come here and grumble about going too fast. Put a kerosene rag around your ankles so the ants won't climb up there and eat that candy butt." Some Earnhardt fans blame the new aero packages—and the quest for more exciting races and the higher TV ratings those races produce—for Earnhardt's death. Said one man on a Charlotte radio call-in show this week, "NASCAR killed Dale Earnhardt."

In the Soviet Union, when a politburo member died, state radio would play funereal classical music. In the South, evidently, it's sad country music that marks the passing of someone important—and ever since Sunday it's been virtually ceaseless on the radio stations near Mooresville. In between tearful testimonials from callers, the normally smooth-talking deejays, themselves choked with emotion, play songs like Conway Twitty's "I Can't See Me Without You" or Vince Gill's "Go Rest High on That Mountain." And then, when the songs are over, the deejays recite a list of dead race-car greats like Davey Allison and Alan Kulwicki and J. D. McDuffie and Tim Richmond and, now, Dale Earnhardt—a list they call the "Heaven 500."

After about half an hour of this, the deejays inevitably put on the weepiest song to come out of Nashville in recent years, a Garth Brooks ballad called "The Dance." Except in this version of "The Dance," amid Brooks's singing ("I'm glad I didn't know / The way it all would end, the way it all would go / Our lives are better left to chance, I could've missed the pain / But I'd have had to miss the dance"), the deejays have inserted testimonials from Earnhardt's fans. (There are actually different versions on different stations.) The effect is a sonic collage of grief as Earnhardt's fans mourn not only his passing but the passing of a way of life. "Racing's over as we knew it," says one woman as a piano plays in the background. "There's no more racing." ■

The myth of Abdurrahman Wahid.

Bad Dream

By JOSHUA KURLANTZICK

WHEN ABDURRAHMAN WAHID became president of Indonesia in October 1999, American foreign-policy makers cheered. A cleric, an intellectual, and a democrat, he seemed capable not simply of moving Indonesia away from dictatorship and corruption but of showing the world that Islam and liberalism could happily coexist.

A year and a half later, Wahid's presidency is in shambles. His rule has been frequently autocratic, endlessly arbitrary, and dogged by allegations of corruption. Thousands have died in mounting political unrest, the economy is tanking, and Wahid is losing support in parliament. And yet he's still the apple of America's eye. With diplomatic hand-shaking sessions and outpourings of cash, we continue to shower him with support. The United States has fallen in love with the vision of a moderate cleric taming religious fanaticism, enshrining democracy, and bringing social peace to the world's largest Muslim country. Unfortunately, in the name of that vision we're backing Abdurrahman Wahid.

Wahid's flaws have never been that hard to see, but from the beginning America hasn't wanted to see them. Before he took over as president, Wahid headed Nahdlatul Ulama, a Muslim social organization with more than 30 million members. The United States liked Wahid's roots in moderate Islam and his grassroots support, and it raised few concerns about his ascent to the presidency following Indonesia's democratic elections, even though his party, National Awakening, won only 11 percent of the seats in parliament. But close observers of Wahid at Nahdlatul Ulama note that he shrugged off internal criticism of his authoritarian leadership of the organization with barbed jokes and impervious smiles, and he routinely made key decisions without consulting leading advisers, a practice that would continue during his presidency.

INDEED, WAHID'S WILLINGNESS to make sweeping promises and break them has become legendary. Early in his tenure as president, Wahid promised greater autonomy for restive provinces like Aceh, a resource-rich part of Sumatra with separatist ambitions. Instead, the president inflamed already high tensions by sending thousands of additional soldiers to Aceh and other separatist hotbeds to arrest local leaders. Human rights groups estimate more than 3,000 Indonesians died in separatist/military violence last year.

Wahid has also abandoned promises to crack down on corruption and cronyism. The president acts like "an uncrowned king," commented the influential daily *Indonesian Observer*. When advisers criticize the president, he reportedly walks out of meetings, then replaces them with family members and friends, many of whom have no political experience. In the summer of 2000, Wahid vowed to professionalize Indonesian politics by decreasing the size of the Cabinet and appointing nonpartisan technocrats. And he did cut Cabinet portfolios from 35 to 26 and appoint several bright technocrats. But at roughly the same time Wahid appointed Prijadi Praptosuhardjo, a close friend without serious qualifications, as finance minister, a critical position in a country whose economy is struggling. Wahid justified Prijadi's appointment by saying, "I have known him for sixteen years"—hardly what anti-cronyism forces wanted to hear. In another reform gone awry, last September Wahid ordered the arrest of Tommy Suharto, the son of the former dictator, for his alleged involvement in a series of unsolved bombings that included an explosion at the Jakarta Stock Exchange. Reformers applauded the move as a first attempt to root out Suharto's cronies. But the police force, which Wahid promised to clean up but hasn't, released Tommy after a short while, and he promptly disappeared.

JOSHUA KURLANTZICK has covered Southeast Asia for *The Economist* and Agence France-Presse.

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What's more, despite promises to the contrary, Wahid appears to be perpetuating the culture of corruption that permeated the Suharto era. He's currently being investigated by parliament in connection with a $2 million donation to Indonesia by the sultan of Brunei. A parliamentary report also revealed that the president may have assisted in the improper release of $4.1 million in state funds to his associates, including his personal masseur. After a censure vote and threats of impeachment this month, Wahid supporters rioted in East Java, burning down the offices of another leading political party. Wahid chalked up the violence to "the price we all have to pay for the continuing process of democracy."

WAHID'S ARROGANCE STEMS partly from his confidence in America's backing. And he's right to be confident: U.S. policymakers have essentially given him a free ride. American businesspeople have advised Indonesia's finance ministry and central bank, and Wahid has retained Henry Kissinger as a special adviser. The U.S. ambassador to Jakarta, Robert Gelbard, is close to the president and is said to champion him to his bosses in Washington. During a visit to the United States, Wahid told then-President Clinton that Gelbard "is like a brother."

American officials, says one well-connected source in the U.S. policy-making community, "showed Wahid that we support him personally, rather than demonstrating that we support the development of political institutions in Indonesia.... We let Wahid know that we would stick by him while he did what he needed to do." Indeed, despite continued human rights abuses by Indonesia's military, Washington last year invited its armed forces to participate in multilateral military exercises in Southeast Asia. Washington's defense establishment may also be considering resuming arms sales to Jakarta.

America's blank-check support isn't just misguided; it's dangerous, because it makes Wahid less likely to compromise in his escalating battle with his political opponents. The Indonesian press and Asian policy magazines speculate that if Wahid continues to take a hard line in his war with parliament, his fanatical supporters may step up their violence, sparking street battles like those that rocked Indonesia in 1997 and 1998. Such violence around the Indonesian capital would likely embolden separatists in Aceh, West Papua, and other outlying provinces, all of which could lead Wahid to try to declare a state of emergency. (He reportedly has already asked the army to consider supporting such a declaration, but the army, to its credit, seems reluctant.) Such a move, needless to say, would imperil exactly the democratization, economic progress, and social peace that the United States hoped Wahid would bring.

America's relationship with Wahid increasingly resembles its relationship with Boris Yeltsin late in his term. There was a time when supporting Indonesia's democratic institutions and supporting Abdurrahman Wahid meant essentially the same thing. But that time is long past. And now the United States is backing an increasingly erratic, increasingly autocratic leader while alienating a democratically elected parliament whose rights and prerogatives Wahid views with scorn (the president is famous for sleeping through parliamentary sessions). The United States can't force Wahid out, but neither should it view his resignation as a blow to Indonesian democracy. If conditions deteriorate, Washington might even ask the president's friends to encourage him to step aside and let his vice president, Megawati Sukarnoputri, who won the largest percentage of the popular vote in 1999, replace him.

Megawati is no panacea either, but that's exactly the point. America must wean itself from the "great man" (or woman) theory of democratic transformations, in which the first democratically elected leader is assumed to perpetually embody the democratic spirit and his or her critics are dismissed as regressive naysayers. America has a powerful stake in a democratic, peaceful, prosperous Indonesia serving as a linchpin of East Asian economic growth and a model for the Muslim world. It has no stake in who leads it there. ■

Jerusalem Dispatch

Unsettled

By YOSSI KLEIN HALEVI

THEORETICALLY, ARIEL SHARON'S ascendance should prompt euphoria among Israel's settlers and dread among its peace activists. In reality, it's more complicated. To begin with, Sharon is not the one-dimensional ideologue he's often portrayed as. What's more, he campaigned in virtual silence, so no one can confidently predict how he'll be touched by power. As a result, Israel's two leading extraparliamentary movements—the Yesha Council, umbrella group for the 144 settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and Peace Now—are both confused and ambivalent. Neither quite knows which Sharon has been elected: the man who built settlements in the West Bank or the man who uprooted them in the Sinai desert.

The office of Shlomo Filber, director-general of the Yesha Council, resembles a government minister's. Two large Israeli flags flank a large government map of Israel identifying areas slated for development, prominently including the West Bank. A photograph of an F-15 jet, offered "with appreciation" from Squadron 105 of the Israeli air force, hangs nearby. Filber's office conveys the settlers' deepest longings—for respectability, affection, normalcy. Even its location emphasizes consensus: not on a settlement but in Ramat Eshkol, the first Jewish neighborhood built in East Jerusalem after the 1967 Six Day War and now firmly part of the Israeli consciousness.

In his own quest for respectability, however, Sharon has so far ignored the settlements; he barely invoked them during the campaign. And settlers fear that in his insistence on national unity Sharon will shunt them aside as divisive. After all, the quest for unity will require him to acknowledge that

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while Israelis admire the settlers' courage and oppose concessions under fire, they no longer regard uprooting settlements as taboo. That is the paradox of the post-Barak national mood: The settlers won the argument over the peace process, but the left convinced most Israelis that if a legitimate peace partner were found, the territories would be expendable. "We hope that Sharon will remain the same man we've known for the last twenty years," says Filber. "But we have no illusions. Sharon," he adds wryly, "is not a member of the Yesha Council."

The settlers, says Filber, expect Sharon to restore security in the territories and to expand settlements, including those deep in the West Bank heartland. But that second goal is dependent on the first: Since the beginning of the new intifada, almost no homes in the territories have been bought by Jews. And Filber is even less certain Sharon will honor his pledge not to uproot settlements—especially isolated ones like Gaza's Netzarim, scene of some of the worst recent violence. The army's general staff is now debating the future of those besieged settlements: Chief of Staff Shaul Mofaz believes Israel should evacuate them, but his deputy, Moshe "Boogi" Ayalon, insists that a pullback under fire will further erode Israel's deterrence.

For now at least, Sharon will almost certainly side with Ayalon. Still, if forced to choose between a unity government and Netzarim, Sharon may opt for unity, which he considers a strategic imperative. And who knows better than the settlers that once Sharon has identified a goal as essential, he lets nothing stand in the way?

ACROSS TOWN, IN a yuppie enclave of West Jerusalem, is the office of Peace Now. The group shares a stone house with the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, a coincidental but symbolic proximity: If Germans and Jews can reconcile, why not Palestinians and Israelis?

The walls are covered with stickers from old battles, expressions from a more certain time. PERES YOU ARE NOT ALONE, reads one from the Labor leader's failed 1996 election campaign. THE CONFLICT WILL END IN JERUSALEM, WITH TWO CAPITALS IN ONE CITY, insists another. A third is imprinted with the word SHALOM on a background of clouds—an unconscious admission of the unreality of Middle East peace.

Leaflets remain from Peace Now's most recent demonstration, which marked 18 years since a right-winger threw a grenade into a Peace Now rally held to demand the resignation of then-Defense Minister Sharon. The attack killed demonstrator Emil Grunzweig. Janet Aviad, a veteran leader of Peace Now, was present that night; in fact, she'd convinced Grunzweig, a friend of hers, to attend the rally. "Emil didn't want to come," she recalls. "He said there was no chance of removing Sharon. I told him to give it one more try."

But today Aviad sounds more ambivalent than outraged at the notion of Sharon as prime minister. "It may even happen that the settlers will oppose an interim agreement by Sharon and we'll support him," she says. "More likely, though, he'll offer a very limited agreement and we'll propose a larger withdrawal."

The peace camp has been groping for a clear position for months now. When its Palestinian partner turned violent last September, Peace Now was stunned into silence. Then, when it placed ads in the official Palestinian press opposing settlements—while Arafat's militias were shooting at settlers—the group was bitterly criticized for appearing to support the enemy. "It was a disgusting mistake," concedes Aviad. "We should not publish our ads in official Palestinian newspapers." The ads embodied Peace Now's dilemma: how to continue advocating withdrawal without conveying a weakened Israeli resolve that encourages more violence. Indeed, the peace camp, which defined the Israeli agenda throughout the 1990s, has been marginalized, at least for now. Activists have even debated changing the name "Peace Now" to the "New Peace Movement," acknowledging the impossibility of immediate reconciliation.

By escalating fighting in the territories, Sharon could revitalize Peace Now, re-creating the outrage that marked the Lebanon invasion, when mothers demonstrated and reservists refused to fight "Sharon's war." Says Aviad, "If Sharon enters Palestinian territory, the peace camp will rise up. It took the Sabra and Shatila massacre for the Labor Party to oppose the Lebanon war. This time opposition will come much more quickly."

Having advocated national unity, Sharon would be vulnerable to such protests. In an interview with THE NEW REPUBLIC during the recent campaign, he admitted two regrets from his past. The first was destroying Israel's settlements in Sinai; the second was dividing Israeli society during the Lebanon war. Sharon's regret over Sinai grants emotional leverage to the Yesha Council; his regret over Lebanon does the same for Peace Now. He may soon have to decide which he regrets more. ■

Team Bush's ignorance of the world economy.

Home Boys

By JOHN B. JUDIS

TO HEAR MOST commentators tell it, President Bush has surrounded himself with foreign policy advisers of unparalleled competence and experience. "Bush is fortunate in being able to turn to a team that knows its way around the international arena," editorialized the *Los Angeles Times* last December. *Washington Post* columnist Jim Hoagland wrote, "This is an all-star team that commands support and respect."

And they're right—sort of. When the Bush administration addresses military and geopolitical affairs—the kind that hark back to the cold war and the coalition against Iraq—it will be able to call on battle-tested veterans. But military and geopolitical affairs don't dominate foreign policy the way they did when Colin Powell, Dick Cheney, and Condoleezza Rice served Bush's father. More and more, foreign policy bleeds

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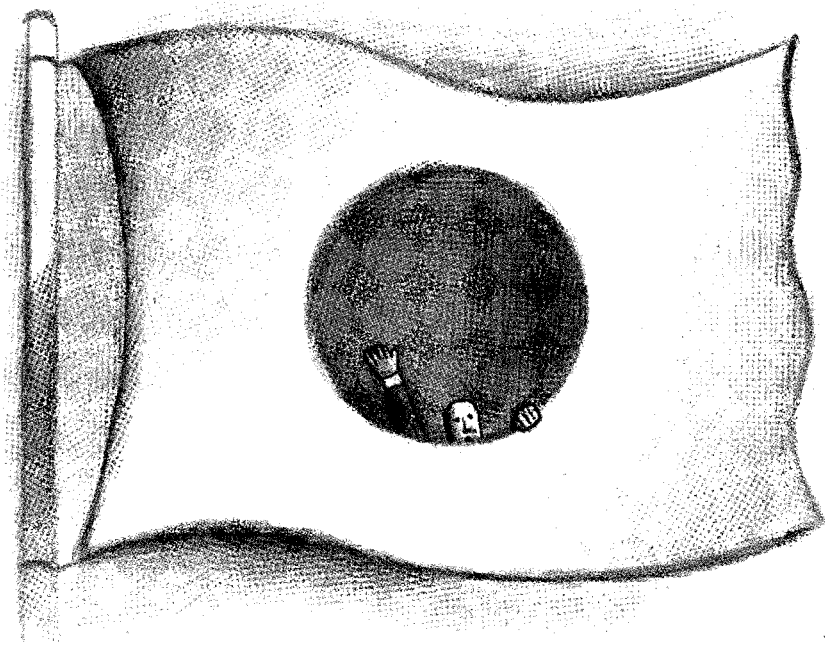

DAVID SUTER

into economic policy, and American security can be imperiled by the collapse of a country's currency as easily as by the transgression of its border. Whatever you think of the Clinton administration's war in Kosovo and its containment of China, at least as important was its handling of a financial crisis that in 1997 threatened to crash the world economy. The globe survived that crisis in part because directing the Clinton administration's response was one of Wall Street's smartest international financiers, Robert Rubin, as well as one of the world's best international economists, Lawrence Summers. By comparison, the Bush administration's foreign policy team lacks a background in economics, and its economic team lacks a background in international affairs. That's a big problem, because the world economy could be headed for trouble again. And, as in 1997, the trouble would likely start in Japan.

YOU PROBABLY HAVEN'T heard much about the Japanese economy lately. But you probably will soon. Although Japanese officials boasted as recently as January that they had finally weathered a decade-long slump, they have proved severely mistaken. During the third quarter of last year, Japan's gross domestic product *fell* 0.6 percent. That means Japan might be heading back into recession. With stock prices falling and Japanese banks, which own many of these stocks, holding massive bad loans, the recession could evolve into something much worse, pulling much of Asia and the United States down with it.

The global economy in general, and East Asia's economy in particular, relies on a viable Japan. Export-dependent economies like Malaysia's, Indonesia's, and Thailand's need Japanese consumers to buy their goods. Japan absorbs about one-fifth of Indonesia's exports and one-seventh of Thailand's, and last year exports from East Asia to Japan increased 22 percent, which helped those countries begin growing again after the calamity that began in 1997. A sudden drop in export earnings could push them back into crisis. East Asian countries also compete with Japan for export markets in Europe and the United States. If a weak Japanese economy sends the yen plummeting against the dollar, these countries, whose currencies are pegged to the dollar, will take a serious economic hit.

The United States, meanwhile, continues to maintain a bizarre economic relationship with Japan: The U.S. buys far more from Japan than Japan buys from the U.S. At the same time, the U.S. depends heavily on Japan's export of capital—through direct investment and the purchase of U.S. Treasury bonds—to finance its trade deficit. As of November 30, the U.S. owed the Japanese $340 billion. If Japan's investments in the U.S. slow as a result of its weakening economy, that could pressure the Federal Reserve to raise interest rates in order to attract foreign capital—confounding its efforts to keep rates low to avoid recession at home.

The Bush team's first stab at economic policy toward Japan came in a talk last December at the American Enterprise Institute by principal White House economic adviser Lawrence Lindsey. Lindsey, basing his presentation on the research of AEI scholar David Asher, argued that Japan's economy is hampered by its high budget deficits. Lindsey called on Japan to reduce public spending in the hope of restoring consumer and investor confidence and freeing funds for private investment. He acknowledged that such a contractionary fiscal policy would, in the short run, increase Japan's trade surplus with America by reducing consumer demand. "If Japan does indeed choose to adopt fiscal reform, it will need to rely on U.S. markets," Lindsey said. But he urged Americans to accept a growing trade deficit for the sake of Japan's long-term economic health.

Lindsey served on Ronald Reagan's Council of Economic Advisers and on the Federal Reserve Board, where he took a special interest in the Community Reinvestment Act. He wrote his dissertation on Reagan's tax cuts, and it became the basis for his book *The Growth Experiment*. He is not known for his understanding of international economics—and it showed. Lindsey was, in effect, counseling the Japanese to follow a fiscal strategy similar to the one the Clinton administration followed in 1993 (the irony of the Bush administration preaching fiscal restraint abroad as it prepares to fritter away the U.S. surplus on tax cuts notwithstanding). But the problem is that Japan's problems today and America's circa 1993 are entirely different.

In the United States in 1993, the economy was already beginning to revive. Clinton could also count on the Federal Reserve to reduce interest rates eventually, which would override the contractionary effect of his fiscal policy. The Japanese economy, by contrast, is still sinking. What's more, there's no way to stimulate it via monetary policy the way Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan did in the United States, since Japanese interest rates are already

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nearly zero and have been for most of the decade. Japan may be in a situation resembling what Keynesians have called a "liquidity trap," where consumers and businesses, lacking confidence in the economy's future, prove resistant to monetary stimuli. In such an environment, more fiscal restraint could be disastrous. Indeed, when Japan raised taxes to reduce its deficit in 1997, it turned a slowdown into a recession—and helped precipitate the great Asian financial crisis that fall.

Japan's economic situation more closely resembles America's in 1932 than 1992. In that fateful year, Herbert Hoover helped turn a steep recession into a depression by proposing spending cuts and tax increases to balance the budget. Brookings Institution fellow Ed Lincoln calls Lindsey's strategy "Hooverism." "There are problems with the kind of public spending Japan has undertaken," he says, "but it would be a lot worse off if you took it all away." Why trust Lincoln over Lindsey? Because Lincoln spent three years as special economic adviser to then-Ambassador Walter Mondale in Tokyo. He's also the author of five books on Japan's economy. Just the kind of qualifications you won't find in the upper reaches of the Bush administration.

THE OTHER MAJOR comments on Japan have come from the new secretary of the treasury, Paul O'Neill. O'Neill—who worked in the Veterans Administration and the Office of Management and Budget in the Nixon and Ford administrations, chaired former President Bush's Education Policy Advisory Committee, and ran Alcoa, which until recently was largely shut out of the Japanese market—has little expertise in international economics. He has pointedly distinguished his approach to Tokyo from that of former Treasury Secretaries Summers and Rubin—promising to avoid a "government-to-government lecture that says, 'We're smarter than anyone else'" and declaring on the eve of his visit last week to the G-7 talks that he doesn't plan to tell Japan to "do this, and do that." Unlike Summers and Rubin, O'Neill plans to turn his persuasive energies toward corporate Japan. He told *The New York Times* that he would advise "industrial people I have worked with who know the real economy" to institute "price competition" in Japanese markets.

In principle, that's a reasonable strategy. While Japan is a world-class producer of automobiles and laptop computers, a lack of internal competition keeps its manufacturing, service, and agricultural sectors far less efficient even than other East Asian countries. (In a visit a few years ago, I waited in line while a clerk figured out a train-ticket refund on an abacus.) These sectors of the Japanese economy depend for their survival partly on informal price controls. Competition would force them into the twenty-first century and, by reducing prices, might also spark consumer demand.

It's a reasonable strategy, but anyone with a strong background in Japanese economics would know it's not likely to work. The premise of O'Neill's strategy is that corporate Japan behaves like corporate America—that Japanese industrialists could decide among themselves to change their practices the same way that, say, American auto companies might adopt a new approach to fuel-efficiency or auto-safety standards. But that's not the way Japan works. Japan's business leaders have close ties to the government, with powerful business associations like the Keidanren extremely sensitive to cues from the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of International Trade and Industry. Moreover, Japan's officials and business leaders remain as committed as ever to an export-driven strategy—a strategy that depends on Japanese firms selling goods at higher prices in the controlled Japanese consumer market than they do in the United States or other competitive markets. (As every visitor to Japan learns, the last place to buy a Japanese car or computer is Japan.) Says R. Taggart Murphy, author of *The Weight of the Yen* and a visiting professor at Tsukuba University, north of Tokyo, "Industrialists do not determine political reality in Japan and never have." In other words, if you want Japan to change its business practices, you have to adopt the very strategy that Summers used and O'Neill has forsworn: pressuring the Japanese government to undertake desperately needed structural reform.

O'Neill could compensate for his own lack of expertise by appointing subordinates who have worked on Asia. After all, Clinton's initial treasury secretary, Lloyd Bentsen, didn't have a background in international economics either. But within the Clinton administration Bentsen could call upon two highly experienced international investment bankers, Rubin and Roger Altman, as well as two highly credentialed international economists, Summers and Laura Tyson. There's nobody of this stature anywhere in the Bush administration, and O'Neill has yet to appoint anyone like that at Treasury. Indeed, the man he is widely expected to select as undersecretary for international affairs—Stanford University economist John Taylor—is a specialist in *domestic* tax and monetary policy. Taylor, like Lindsey, has advocated a hands-off approach to financial crises. In December 1998 Taylor even called for abolishing the International Monetary Fund—which would leave the United States back where it was in the 1930s, without any organized international means to prevent currency crises. So far, Bush has appointed only one official who knows something about international finance: U.S. Trade Representative Bob Zoellick. During his confirmation hearings, thankfully, Zoellick distanced himself from Lindsey's prescriptions. But it is not clear Zoellick will have much clout. After all, Bush initially wanted to deny the trade representative Cabinet status, relenting only under intense pressure from business. And, while Bush got to know Lindsey well during the campaign, Zoellick is a James Baker protégé who lacks close personal ties to the president.

IT'S NOT HOPELESS. Lindsey, O'Neill, and Taylor could eventually develop a sophisticated approach to Japan and the IMF that helps navigate the United States (and the rest of the world) through the coming turbulence. Government officials can learn on the job. But if the Bush administration takes as long to figure out Japan as the Clinton administration took to figure out the Balkans, we could have a serious financial crisis on our hands before the year is out. And everything the Bushies learned battling the Soviet Union and smashing Iraq won't help them one bit. ■

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Psychology discovers happiness.

I'm OK, You're OK

By GREGG EASTERBROOK

"LIFE IS DIVIDED up into the horrible and the miserable," Woody Allen tells Diane Keaton in *Annie Hall*. "The horrible would be like terminal cases, blind people, cripples—I don't know how they get through life. It's amazing to me. And the miserable is everyone else. So, when you go through life, you should be thankful that you're miserable."

That's a fairly apt summary of the last century's consensus regarding the psyche. Psychiatry now recognizes some 14 "major" mental disorders, in addition to countless lesser maladies. Unipolar depression—unremitting blue feelings—has risen tenfold since World War II and now afflicts an estimated 18 million Americans. Increasingly, even children are prescribed psychotropic drugs, while frustrated drivers are described as not merely discourteous but enraged. In the past 100 years, academic journals have published 8,166 articles on "anger," compared with 416 on "forgiveness"; in its latest edition, the presumably encyclopedic *Encyclopedia of Human Emotions*, a reference for clinicians, lists page after page of detrimental mental states but has no entry for "gratitude." Sigmund Freud declared mental torment the normal human condition and suggested that most people's best possible outcome would be to rise from neurosis into "ordinary unhappiness." It's a wonder we don't all lose our minds.

And yet, somehow, most people turn out OK. Only a tiny fraction of the populace commit antisocial acts or lose their ability to function in society. Roughly 80 percent of Americans describe themselves as basically satisfied with their lives. Not only have we not all lost our minds, but, considering modern stress, most of our minds seem in surprisingly good condition.

This observation is leading to a revolutionary development in the theory of the psyche—positive psychology, which seeks to change the focus of inquiry from what causes psychosis to what causes sanity. Researchers "tend to study the things that can go wrong in people's minds but not the things that can go right," says Robert Emmons, a psychologist at the University of California at Davis. Yet what can go right is at least as important, not just for individuals but for society. And, in contrast to much modern scholarship, positive psychology may produce knowledge that actually improves lives and makes the world a better place.

The initial ideas of positive psychology came to Martin Seligman 35 years ago when he and a colleague were giving electric shocks to dogs. Seligman, who has since become a professor of psychology at the University of Pennsylvania and is a past president of the American Psychological Association, found that by zapping dogs unless they jumped a barrier, he could reduce the animals to a state of cowering helplessness in which they would not attempt any other tasks. It may seem obvious that creatures exposed to regular pain would enter a state of wretchedness, but the psychology establishment of the time, dominated by behaviorists, rejected Seligman's result. Behaviorism claimed that dogs (or people) do that for which they are rewarded and avoid that for which they are punished: A dog shocked when performing one task should just move on to another. But the subjects of Seligman's experiment simply sat down and whimpered pitifully. Seligman took this as evidence that psychological states are in some sense *learned*, not merely involuntary reflexes to stimuli. And if negative mental states can be learned, he eventually realized, why not altruism or equanimity?

When Seligman proposed such rethinking to some older professors, it made them furious. After all, a fundamentally positive approach to psychology conflicted with the profession's modern history. Roughly since the Enlightenment, study of the mind had been flavored by the Cartesian notion that abstract thought is the brain's calling, while emotional states are handicaps. That view was briefly challenged by Charles Darwin, who, after publishing *The Origin of Species*, hypothesized that if physical traits had evolved, mental states must have, too. Darwin's final work, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, published in 1872, speculated that psychological qualities must be mainly beneficial or evolution would not have preserved them—loyalty, for instance, could have enhanced early humans' survival by causing them to care for one another.

But while Darwin's views on biology spread throughout the intellectual world, his views on the mind were quietly dismissed. Freud's much more negative interpretation—that the consciousness is steeped in self-delusion and emotions are repellent by-products of infantile sexual compulsions—fit the new century's zeitgeist of existential despair. When evidence for Freud's claims eventually turned out to be shaky, the equally uninviting model of behaviorism arose. Behaviorism held that we're all lab rats in a meaningless maze, and it viewed human feeling with open contempt. The dogma's low point came when the behaviorist guru John Watson pronounced that parents should "never hug and kiss" children, because this would only condition them to want affection.

At about the time behaviorism was reaching its zenith, the U.S. government established the National Institute of Mental Health and greatly expanded the Veterans Administration. The NIMH gave grants almost exclusively to researchers

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studying mental illness, while the VA (now the Department of Veterans Affairs) paid to train a generation of clinicians to treat World War II combat trauma. Between Freudianism, behaviorism, and a government that funded the study and treatment of the negative, psychology in the early postwar era became a truly dismal science.

Of course, this view had opponents. Humanistic psychology, founded by Abraham Maslow in the 1950s, argued both that life was well worth living and that people could find fulfillment by understanding that human needs come in a sequence, from physical to spiritual. (Seligman has been accused of borrowing ideas from humanistic psychology.) Around the same time, physicians accidentally discovered that some new tuberculosis drugs palliated depression. The discovery proved a hammer blow against Freudianism. As psychologists Fari Amini, Richard Lannon, and Thomas Lewis note in their book, *A General Theory of Love*, if a few molecules can alleviate psychological pain, "[h]ow does one square *that* with the supposed preeminence of repressed sexual urges as the cause of all matters emotional?"

MATTHEW MARTIN

The discovery that emotions have a biological component provided an opening for new views of the psyche. It meant mental states were not childhood curses (Freud) or involuntary twitches (behaviorism) but an integral element of the living world, evolving with life just as Darwin had guessed. Barbara Frederickson, a positive psychologist at the University of Michigan, has since expanded on Darwin's view, noting that while some negative emotions confer obvious survival advantages—fear causes you to run—natural selection may favor positive emotions in more subtle ways. A person who is joyful or outgoing, Frederickson supposes, is more likely to make friends; the friends would then come to the person's aid in times of crisis, increasing the odds that friendliness would be passed to offspring. Further, as Amini, Lannon, and Lewis put it, if emotional states have a biological basis, they must be "part of the physical universe" and therefore "lawful," subject to understanding.

By the early '90s, researchers had fashioned this cluster of insights into a new movement Seligman originally called "good life" studies—the effort to determine what psychological forces caused people such as Eleanor Roosevelt (one of his heroes) to live life admirably. But because "good life" can connote champagne and dancing girls, in the late '90s advocates renamed the framework "positive psychology." Since then, the concept has gained ground with researchers.

Positive psychology's first empirical focus was figuring out who exactly is happy. Edward Diener, a psychologist at the University of Illinois, has come to the following conclusions. First, poverty causes unhappiness but wealth does not cause happiness. Second, the old as a group have more "life satisfaction" than the young. (Diener notes, "The minds of the young are full of the things they want to achieve and have not, whereas most of the elderly have either achieved what they wanted or made their peace with the fact that they never will.") And, third, according to a well-being test designed by Diener, the norm is positive; most Americans' scores on his test indicate they are "slightly satisfied" with life.

Diener's discovery that the impoverished are unhappy is hardly surprising: In a classic confirm-the-obvious exercise, he went to Calcutta and produced irrefutable data that the poor there experience "a very low level of life satisfaction." Studies by Diener and others show that as a person's income rises toward the middle-class level, his or her sense of well-being rises as well. But once basic material needs are met, income decouples from happiness. Since the 1957 publication of John Kenneth Galbraith's *The Affluent Society*, real income for the average American has trebled. But during that same period the fraction of Americans who describe themselves as "very happy" in the University of Chicago's long-running National Opinion Research Center polls has not budged: It was one-third in 1957, and it is one-third today.

Researchers surmise that once people become middle-class, additional income ceases to correlate with happiness because people begin to perceive money primarily in relation to those around them. Most do not think, *Does my house meet my needs?* but rather, *How nice is my house compared with the neighbors'?* Upon reaching upper income brackets, people may grow obsessed with what they still don't have, activating some kind of "nature's revenge" law that denies extra contentment to the wealthy. When Diener gave his tests to a group of multimillionaires from the *Forbes* 400, he found that, on average, they were only a tiny bit happier than the typical suburbanite.

Through its studies of the relationship between income and happiness, positive psychology supports the philosophi-

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cal-theological conclusion that longing for material things ultimately harms the person doing the longing. Materialism also causes people to spend rather than save, which embeds anxiety in daily life—a point championed by Harvard University economist Juliet Schor. Cross-cultural studies of happiness buttress these findings. Sociologist Ronald Inglehart has found that life satisfaction is highest in the Scandinavian countries (where income is fairly evenly distributed, mitigating neighbors'-house angst) and lowest in poor nations. Life satisfaction is also unusually high in Ireland, which boasts a "count your blessings" culture. Life satisfaction is distressingly low in affluent Japan—much lower than in Argentina or Hungary—perhaps because Japanese culture emphasizes money even more relentlessly than American culture.

Exactly how "happy" a person might be is ephemeral, of course. Psychologist Daniel Kahneman of Princeton University has been attempting for years to create a wholly objective measure of well-being, without much success. Kahneman found, for instance, that if he asked college students whether they were happy, most said yes. But if he first asked how many dates they had had in the last month and then asked if they were happy, most said no. Kahneman says he stopped asking subjects if they considered themselves unhappy because the question caused some to burst into tears.

Positive psychology further finds that happiness is hard. Laura King of Southern Methodist University, writing in the current issue of the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, shows that a positive attitude toward life requires considerable effort; people may slip into melancholy simply because it's the path of least resistance. Freud anticipated this when he noted that "unhappiness is much less difficult to experience" than elevated feelings. As a result, positive psychologists tend to view happiness as a condition that must be actively sought. Kahneman marvels at one study that found that quadriplegics have high emotional satisfaction relative to lottery winners. The lottery winners, we can guess, got swept up in and betrayed by materialism, while the quadriplegics worked hard to adjust to their condition and in so doing learned how to appreciate life better.

Finally, positive psychology suggests individual happiness is not self-indulgent but in the interest of society, since studies show happy people are more likely to do volunteer work, give to charity, and contribute to their communities in other ways. Robert Browning wrote, "[M]ake us happy and you make us good." A wonderful, quirky 1998 book by Dennis Prager, *Happiness Is a Serious Problem*, proposes that people actually have a civic duty to become happy because this will make them altruistic.

THIS ISN'T TO say that positive psychology advocates an unrealistically rosy view of life. Psychologist Lisa Aspinwall of the University of Utah has found that one reason optimists generally have better "life outcomes" than pessimists is they pay more attention to safety and health warnings: Being optimistic doesn't make them blind to threats but rather makes them want to be around for the long haul.

Reversing the logic of dogs shocked into helplessness, Seligman advocates "learned optimism"—the idea that, by learning to expect tribulations and occasional unhappiness, people can avoid pessimism. Seligman thinks primary schools should teach children to expect difficulties, so that when problems start, as inevitably they will, children will not be traumatized but will view occasional setbacks as part of the natural course of events. An idealized anticipation of life, Seligman says, only creates disillusionment, whereas expecting to have some really bad days fosters a sustainable positive outlook. Managing one's expectations in this way, of course, requires self-control. And in fact Roy Baumeister, a researcher at Case Western Reserve University, has found that self-control is a better predictor of "life outcomes"—career and marriage success, overall happiness—than IQ.

Gratitude and forgiveness also turn out to promote happiness. Recent studies have shown that people who describe themselves as grateful—to others and to God or nature for the gift of life—tend to enjoy better health, more successful careers, and less depression than the population as a whole. These results hold even when researchers factor out age and income, equalizing for the fact that the affluent or good-looking might have more to be grateful for. And just as positive psychology doesn't recommend Pollyannaish optimism, it doesn't call for Panglossian gratitude. "To say we feel grateful is not to say that everything in our lives is necessarily great," says Emmons, the University of California psychologist. "It just means ... if you only think about your disappointments and unsatisfied wants, you may be prone to unhappiness. If you're fully aware of your disappointments but at the same time thankful for the good that has happened and for your chance to live, you may show higher indices of well-being."

In this regard, the power of self-suggestion is considerable: Studies show that those who dwell on negative experiences become negative, while those who keep "gratitude journals," in which they write down what they're thankful for, experience improved well-being. Counting your blessings may sound corny, but if it helps you do better in life or simply have a good day, it's perfectly rational. Adam Smith anticipated this in his 1759 *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, one premise of which is that people who do not feel grateful cheat themselves out of their experience of life. Lack of gratitude leads to bitterness, Smith wrote, and bitterness only harms the person who feels it.

Likewise, positive psychology advises forgiveness because it benefits the person who forgives. If you bear a grudge or want retribution, your own well-being declines. Even in cases when someone has done you a severe wrong, such as a crime, forgiving the person is in your self-interest, because it prevents your own life from being subsumed in bitterness.

DEPRESSION IS THE malady of greatest concern to positive psychology, and here the figures are haunting. Incidence of bipolar depression—exaggerated mood swings—has not changed during the postwar era; the disorder is now believed to be primarily biological and is treated with medication. But the tenfold postwar increase in incidence of unipolar depression appears to have no biological explanation, and the rate holds in all developed nations.

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Steadily rising Western standards of living have been accompanied by a huge upswing in the percentage of the population that constantly feels bad. What's going on?

Seligman thinks most unipolar depression is a learned condition, and he offers four causes. First, too much individualism: "Unipolar depression is a disorder of the thwarting of the I, and we are increasingly taught to view all through the I." Past emphases on patriotism, family, and faith may sometimes have been suffocating but also let individuals view their private disappointments as minor within the larger context. Today, Seligman supposes, "rampant individualism causes us to think that our setbacks are of vast importance, and thus something to become depressed about."

Next, Seligman blames the self-esteem trend. "Self-esteem emphasis has made everybody think there's something fundamentally *wrong* if you don't feel good, as opposed to 'We just don't feel good right now but will later,'" he says. If something is fundamentally *wrong* with your life, that's pretty depressing. Self-esteem types maintain that people should feel good about themselves all the time, an idea positive-psychology proponents deem totally unrealistic. The preaching of self-esteem in schools, Seligman thinks, has backfired by increasing melancholy.

Third, Seligman thinks depression is rising because of "the promiscuity of postwar teaching of victimology and helplessness." Intellectuals and the media have spent the last couple of decades discovering victims; surveys find that ever-higher percentages of incoming college freshmen describe themselves as having been victimized or possessing little control over their fates—though, objectively, personal freedom has never been higher. The "We're all victims" view discourages people from asserting control over their psyches.

Seligman finds particularly counterproductive the fad of adults claiming they were victimized by their parents. Only in extreme cases—such as sexual abuse—is there a clear link between parenting and adult personality: "You are entitled to blame your parents for the genes they gave you, but you are not entitled, by any research I know of, to blame them for the way they treated you," Seligman says. Depressed patients often attribute their condition to their parents, but once recovered they rarely say their parents were to blame for their disorder.

Fourth on Seligman's list of depression's causes is runaway consumerism. "Shopping, sports cars, expensive chocolates—these things are shortcuts to well-being," he says. While overall happiness has not increased as national income has trebled in the postwar period, surveys show that what Americans expect materially has grown in lockstep with the earnings curve. Like a street drug, materialism requires more and more to produce the same brief high. As David Myers, a social scientist at Hope College in Holland, Michigan, has noted of this predicament, "[T]he victor belongs to the spoils."

Whatever the causes of unipolar depression, there are two main treatments. One is Prozac and an expanding variety of related medications. The other is cognitive therapy, a psychological approach based on the premise that your mind can fix its own problems. Both pharmacology and cognitive therapy show similar effectiveness—about two-thirds of patients get better, and one-third do not respond. Proponents of positive psychology generally prefer the cognitive route.

The cognitive strategy against depression includes learning to recognize the "automatic" negative thoughts that flit through the mind as the blues are coming on and to counter such thoughts. To some extent this is simply common sense and echoes what is found in "power of positive thinking" books. But previous theories of the mind have distinctly lacked common sense and, therefore, have done little good. The University of Illinois's Diener says, "Freudian theory offered little of value to society, wanting to convince us we were all screwed up and there was nothing we could do beyond getting our misery under control. Positive psychology offers patients a realistic way to treat conditions and offers society as a whole a way to build virtues and human strengths."

SELIGMAN IS TRYING to convey this message on a broader scale with a pilot program in Philadelphia middle schools to teach students "learned optimism." Positive psychology is also integral to the "character education" movement blooming in schools and universities, which teaches both that virtue is a duty and that it improves individual lives. These efforts may soon gain a powerful new rationale, as growing research suggests that a positive psychological outlook not only improves "life outcomes" but enhances health directly. In her new book *The Balance Within*, Esther Sternberg, chief of neuroendocrine immunology and behavior at the National Institutes of Health, presents evidence that emotions play a role in regulating the immune system—the more positive your sense of well-being, the better your white blood cells function.

By focusing on improvement rather than dysfunction, the positive-psychology movement also hopes to destigmatize mental therapy. Today most insurers will not reimburse patients for therapy unless their diagnosis includes one of the standard codes for mental illness. The result is that many pay for treatment out of their own pockets to avoid having such an entry on medical records, while many others receive no care. Seligman and University of Michigan psychologist Christopher Peterson are trying to change this by working on a manual for classification of "the sanities," a handbook that would be the reverse of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* that clinicians use to code mental illnesses. Such a volume, they believe, not only might solve the insurance-records problem but could encourage the many who experience mild psychological pain to get help—just as physicians once thought patients should simply live with mild ailments, such as aching knees, but now believe people should seek every possible cure.

As positive psychology moves from the margins to the mainstream, millions may embrace the remarkable idea that it is not only in society's interest to be altruistic, optimistic, and forgiving but in your own. For roughly a century, academic theory has assumed that when people lose their minds, the awful truth about life is revealed. Now comes a theory that says the truth is revealed when people acquire happiness and virtue. Which model sounds better to you? ■

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Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Differences in Taste

VOLTAIRE, SAYS AN anecdote, was invited one evening to go along with a friend to a bordello, a place with certain specialties. Voltaire went. Next week the friend invited him again, and he declined. "But," said the friend, "you seemed to enjoy it last week." Voltaire replied, "Once, a philosopher. Twice, a pervert."

Anthony Hopkins has gone to Hannibal Lecter for the second time. In *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991), Hopkins's performance as the brilliant, wily cannibal was such a diabolical act of creative imagination that it gave the whole film a sense of enveloping hell. Hopkins was so frightening that he made the picture look better than it was. The tortuous plot, the incredible conclusion, Jodie Foster's mild performance—all benefited from the sheer force of Hopkins's Lecter. Now, in **Hannibal** (MGM), Hopkins tries to recapture Lecter, but this time Lecter is only a series of gropings in the past—remembered gestures, intonations, tricks, and chuckles, without a creative center, without anything like the generative fright of the original. Actors, particularly stars, have often repeated roles in sequels or series, but rarely do those roles call for the intensity that Hopkins used in the first Lecter—and he cannot find it again.

Hopkins seems to be pulling souvenirs of his last performance from a closet and displaying them. In considerable measure this is because there is nothing new for Lecter to do: the role is only more of the same, mechanically varied, and of course without the introductory prison scene that stamped Lecter on the picture and on our minds. In a shock vehicle, more is less. Thomas Harris, who wrote *The Silence of the Lambs*, provided another novel about Lecter, which (like the first) I denied myself the pleasure of reading, and presumably Harris can keep supplying more for decades. But for Hopkins, an actor of extraordinary talent, the repetition vitiates. He may not know the Voltaire anecdote, but throughout the film he made me aware of it.

Grossness has replaced engrossment in Number Two of the series. The director, Ridley Scott, has understood that he had to raise the shock level this time, and he strains for it throughout. MGM gave the press a memorandum announcing that the film is rated R and promising not to advertise or promote it in media where the audience is younger than seventeen. How they are going to be able to keep that promise will have to be seen; but what I want to know is, how are they going to protect people who are over seventeen?

Doubtless there has been worse horror on screen (though probably not as slickly produced), but is that sufficient excuse for competing with that horror? How many films have there been in which a man is seated at a dinner table with the top of his skull lifted off and his brain revealed, sitting calmly while his host excises a bit of that brain, sautés it, then feeds it back to the victim? You wince, perhaps? So did the audience, groaning at the scene when I saw *Hannibal*, but then at the end of the film they applauded. There is no displeasing some people.

The story, which moves from Washington to Florence and other venues, doesn't matter. (The adaptation, by David Mamet and Steven Zillian, might as well have been done by much lesser hands.) It is only a series of concoctions for Lecter to revel fiendishly in, or for Julianne Moore, the FBI agent this time, to look thoughtful or dignified in. Moore is as talented as her predecessor in the role was bland, but despite an attempt to suggest the weird sexual attraction that Lecter has for her, Moore's performance is—could only be—a series of shots in one pose or another.

Hannibal, along with its predestined popularity, does not signify the decline and fall of Western civilization. Western civilization has been declining and falling, at the same time that it has been progressing, almost since it began: that is part of its quality. *Hannibal* merely signals that this quality is being maintained.

A French picture called **The Taste of Others** (Offline) is not, despite its title, a Gallic version of *Hannibal*. In fact, absolutely everything about this first film by Agnès Jaoui is at the other end of the spectrum from Lecter II. It not only has no violence, it very nearly has no story; it not only is not meant to zoom us into Movieland, it seems to come down off the screen to sit with us and become friendly.

Jaoui is much better known in France than here—as actress and writer—though she has been seen here in a few films. She wrote this picture with her husband, Jean-Pierre Bacri, and both of them are in it. The screenplay involves a tycoon (Bacri), his bodyguard, his chauffeur, an actress from whom the tycoon takes English lessons, and a bartender who has been around (Jaoui) and is still rounding. (When a man comes to her bar for a drink, she greets him as if they were meeting again after some time. He's a bit confused and asks whether they have met before; she smiles and says, "Yes. We once had sex together.")

For about half the film, these lives and others simply flow along, in and around Paris, without developing any kind of drama, just the lineaments of reasonably interesting characters. About midway I found myself hoping that no kind of plot would develop: that the film would simply follow appreciatively and humorously the interlocked lives of these people. Almost disappointingly, the screenplay evolves a mild point: every one of the major characters gets a bit of surprise in his or her life, a situation that is either unexpected or was thought impossible. But, thank heaven, there is not much of a plot. Mostly it's just 112 minutes with some moderately pleasant people.

Jaoui's directing and sympathy are what hold us from the start. The opening shot is of two men sitting at a restaurant table having a deep discussion about some minor matter in a friendly but vigorous way. Then the camera moves to another table, where the tycoon and his wife are seated. Quickly it becomes clear that Jaoui has started with a deliberately false emphasis, a Truffaut touch: the two men certainly figure in the film, but they are the chauffeur and bodyguard of the tycoon and soon take their places as such. Jaoui establishes from the first moments that every life is important to the person living it—the hierarchy of minor and major characters is merely an artistic device—and she underscores the course of their lives with the lateral movement of the camera. Of course most camera movement is lateral, but Jaoui italicizes it.

All the performances are, in a good sense, unremarkable: none of the cast strives to make points, even the woman who plays the actress. In fact, we see her on stage in a scene from Racine's *Bérénice*, and her acting there compared with the

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woman's offstage self is like the Player Queen in *Hamlet* compared with Gertrude. Bacri carries his load of concerns and frustrations fairly humorously. Jaoui is appealingly straightforward as the bartender.

One puzzle: her use of music. From time to time we hear some quite irrelevant music. Jaoui said in an interview that she thinks the music is "very much in keeping" with the film. A soprano warbling "Caro nome" in the middle of a contemporary business scene? A military band at the end playing a Piaf song in march tempo? I didn't get it; but I didn't mind. ■

Mindy Aloff on Dance
The Troublemaker

ARLENE CROCE WROTE the "Dancing" column for *The New Yorker* between 1973 and 1996. Indeed, William Shawn invented the column for her. Although dance had been sporadically covered in the magazine in the decades since its founding—Janet Flanner's periodic reports on Josephine Baker from Paris between the 1920s and the 1950s, Philip Hamburger's affecting and informative interview in 1943 with the tapper Clayton ("Peg Leg") Bates, Bernard Taper's reporting on George Balanchine, Calvin Tomkins on Merce Cunningham—it was Croce's column that made dancing a subject of consistent critical attention there, and elsewhere.

Dance fans in the 1970s and 1980s would tear into her essays before they even glanced at the cartoons. Some of her readers from that era can still quote her best phrases by heart: "The arabesque is real, the leg is not"; "Noses that could be roses, or whatever the mind supposes" (a send-up of elaborate interpretations of postmodern dance). Croce was more than a great dance reviewer: she was a writer of learning and cutting-edge wit, a critic of importance on the order of Edwin Denby or Stark Young, and a polemicist to rival Lincoln Kirstein—none of whose work hers in the least resembled. ("It is sometimes erroneously said that a School of Denby exists in American dance criticism," she wrote in her deeply felt tribute to Denby, on the occasion of the publication of his collected essays and reviews after his death. "Schools are based on ideas and theories, and Denby's critical insight was a gift—his alone.")

Even now that she is no longer covering dance as a beat, she remains the mistress of the masterful apothegm. In "On *Beauty* Bare," a 1999 essay about the Kirov Ballet's recent attempt to reconstruct the *Sleeping Beauty* of Marius Petipa's own time, she writes: "The only way to revive choreography is by magic empathy. 'Petipa' is not an author, or even a text, but a climate of inspiration, like Auden's Freud.'" And that is what Croce's work is, too: a climate of inspiration, in the theater and on the page.

"On *Beauty* Bare" serves as a monumental conclusion to *Writing in the Dark, Dancing in* The New Yorker (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 768 pp., $40), the new Croce reader, whose title plays on the title of her column. At this point, this is the only volume of Croce's writing in print. Although it has been characterized as a "doorstop," in fact it is just a partial view of her oeuvre, whose several thousand pages include three published collections (*Afterimages* in 1977, *Going to the Dance* in 1982, *Sight Lines* in 1987), dozens of uncollected essays and profiles (a few on the cinema and on visual art), and her extraordinary early study *The Fred Astaire & Ginger Rogers Book*, a brilliantly evocative analysis of the ten films that the pair made for RKO. It has become impossible to make any informed statement about those films without having consulted Croce's book: she set the standard for discussion.

That is one of Croce's specialties: setting the standard. By the time she began to report on theatrical dance for *The New Yorker*, she was already something of an underground legend among balletomanes and intellectuals in New York, who—whether appreciatively or disdainfully—would quote her words as writ. When I was her colleague at the magazine, between 1989 and 1993, Croce was firmly established among New York

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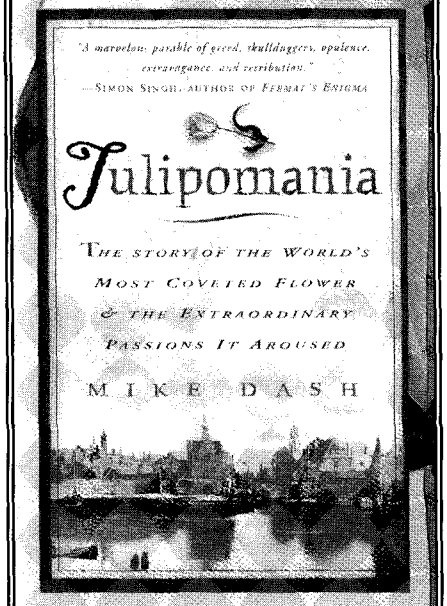
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balletgoers and dance aficionados across the country as a lightning rod for controversy, not only in the matter of how the New York City Ballet was faring in Balanchine's absence—"Dimming the Lights," the title of her essay on the subject in 1988, sums up her point of view—but also in regard to her observation that the world of theatrical dancing in general was in many ways unhealthy and increasingly sterile.

In the ensuing years, Croce has intensified her expression of these dour and disappointed views, most famously in "Discussing the Undiscussable," her widely vilified condemnation of the choreographer Bill T. Jones for using (she would probably say "exploiting") people terminally ill with AIDS and cancer in video clips for *Still/Here*, a work that she refused to see yet felt it imperative to discuss in print. I disagreed with some of her evaluations ten years ago and continue to disagree with some now. Still, having seen many of the same productions that Croce saw, it was never a question, at least for me, that her rage at Jones and her condemnation of NYCB's director Peter Martins proceeded directly from her engagement with the dancing that she either witnessed on stage or made an educated guess, based on forty years of intensive theatergoing, that she would have witnessed had she attended.

Although her polemics have been extensively rehashed in political terms (there is even a book, *The Crisis of Criticism*, devoted to responses to her fury at Jones), the one thing that Croce is not is a political writer. She does not work according to an agenda, stated or unstated. She does not shade her opinions to conform with any ideas that are unrelated to the choreography and the performances that she addresses. One may find her conclusions hard to accept. "When a victim artist finds his or her public, a perfect, mutually manipulative union is formed which no critic may put asunder. Such an artist is Pina Bausch. Such an audience is the Brooklyn Academy's Next Wave subscription list, which also welcomed Bill T. Jones": those are sentences whose rhetorical power is rivaled only by their injustice. But they cannot be refuted by appeals to authority or to experience outside the theater—which is what most of those who have challenged them have relied upon. Reading some of those refutations recently, I was struck by how irrational and childish they sound, and how ineffectual they remain.

"Discussing the Undiscussable" is hardly vintage Croce: the grain of analytical greatness in it—its reinterpretation of Romanticism—is shunted toward the end and left to wither undeveloped. And, as Croce herself confesses in her introduction to her new book, the essay suffers from a problem of tone. It turns out that it began as a humor piece and then was recast as a serious essay, trailing its parodic origins, alas for all of us, like tin cans strung to a car bumper. Its readers who felt that it attacked them were not wrong. What they could not know was that the attack was subterranean, sunk deeply within the writing as an expressive instrument, rather than in any ideology that the writing appeared to be expressing. To confront it once and for all, one would have had better recourse to humorous, rather than earnest, aggression.

And yet, even with all of the essay's willfulness, it continues to radiate energy and life. It actually cares about something the writer sees as having been destroyed: a kind of unwritten contract between performer and audience about the identities of reality and illusion in the performing arts. Many artists and readers who despised the essay will say that it was a contract that they never drafted and that they refused to sign; but Croce clearly believed in it with an almost religious conviction, and throughout the piece she is burying her own dead, the dead of an imaginative world. In "Discussing the Undiscussable" she is a contemporary Antigone, a character who is a heroine to readers and theatergoers only because they do not have to put up with her themselves.

Arlene Croce by Jack Coughlin for The New Republic

Unlike many dance critics covering a beat, Croce did not write to be liked, or even to be rewarded by her employers. She wrote to be read. She could not be predicted or controlled, and, combined with her intellectual talent and her rhetorical genius, the result could be explosive in senses either exciting or terrifying, depending on whether the reader is on the sidelines of the action or the target of it. During the 1960s, she wrote a spectacularly vivid and fearless "Letter from New York" for the British monthly *The Dancing Times*, and highly imaginative as well as intermittently blistering essays for New York periodicals. *Ballet Review*, the quarterly that she founded in 1965, typing it up and preparing it for mailing on her dining-room table, was not only unlike any other dance publication of the time; it was unlike other arts publications of any kind.

It published intensely personal, often fiercely polemical, and always jaw-droppingly specific essays about dance, ballet a specialty. It conducted the most focused and enlightening interviews with dancers to be found anywhere. It actually graded new productions, and it was not averse to handing out Fs. Its covers were designed by Edward Gorey, then familiar to masses of readers for his trade-book drawings and to a coterie of a few hundred for his whimsical little volumes that could be found at the Gotham Book Mart in Manhattan. A list of the quarterly's contributors, then mostly unknown to a

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general readership, includes a number of the most respected dance commentators of our own day. Yet the most articulate regular in *Ballet Review* continued to be Croce herself, who once said that she never intended to write regularly for the magazine, but found herself doing so when one writer or another wasn't able to deliver. The editor's desperation became the writer's opportunity.

Writing in the Dark contains none of this early, excessively fierce Croce, work that, if it were dancing or music—that is, an art veering toward abstraction—would be some of the greatest in the history of the art form, but that, as discursive writing, would not be appreciated by many readers who never saw the performances (or read the journalism) at which she lobbed grenades with pinpoint accuracy, in a prose so sharp it still smarts. Unlike, say, the music and theater criticism of George Bernard Shaw, whose vituperations have lasted as amusing literature and wonderful historical documents, Croce's early dance criticism misses the passages of extended description that, in her later work, would serve as balm to the lacerating judgments and as evidence for the arguments.

Although she is frequently praised for her descriptions of dance, a rereading of her work shows her to rely on description less than one remembers. She typically analyzes to evaluate and uses description to evoke or to support an analytic point, rather than offering it, like Denby, from an impulse to document. And yet there are passages of appreciation in her reviews that make it clear that she is Denby's spiritual offspring, an inheritor of his gift for making distinctions between what a dancer does on stage and its theatrical effect. Consider this portrait, from 1980, of the great tapper Chuck Green, admired by his fellow hoofers of all generations yet known to comparatively few dancegoers during his lifetime:

> In his boxy tuxedo with the vented coattails and the ankle-length pants, in long bump-toed shoes, Green looks twice the eccentric he really is, but his style is sui generis, no doubt about it. The gunboat shoes stay flat-footed through a maze of stiletto taps, and we don't see the heel drops that sound like washtub thumps. When Green wants to get visual, he gives us air turns with heel clicks, ungainly hops with cartwheeling arms, ungainlier swooping pivots in a crouch, coattails awhirl. Or he skids back and forth, one foot flat and the other swinging. What Green does can be imitated but it can't be learned. It's soul food for the senses.

Now, compare this to Denby's more dispassionate account of the African Dance Festival, presented by Asadata Dafora, the venerated dancer from Sierra Leone, at Carnegie Hall in 1943:

> The dances of the village girls looked at first quite simple, with an odd hieratic stiffness about them. As the chorus moved forward, generally in single file, the feet kept reiterating sharply a syncopated rhythm of steps and sole taps. The tap was made from the ankle, without moving the knee. Meanwhile the arms performed the dance variations, creating a secondary rhythm. The shoulders were as flexible as the ankles and they often moved in an independent rhythm. Occasionally there were accented motions (like "bumps") in the upper spine. And when the torso turned or bent it seemed to move from the hips. The head was generally kept horizontal, as if unconcerned. In the end one noticed that the exactness of the posture, the firmness of the rhythm gave to the dance both dignity and force; that the peculiarities of the style could not be "savage" or accidental, but were the outcome of a consistent and highly cultivated dance tradition. The odd grace it had was distinctly elegant and certainly difficult to achieve.

Denby—a trained dancer and a practicing poet—is slightly detached from the

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company that he puts under a microscope; and he characteristically keeps metaphors to a minimum. Croce—who has never published poetry or taken a dance lesson—relies on vivid, cinematic images and seems to be, as Kirstein once observed of her criticism, inside the body of the dancer. Her prose is much more passionate than Denby's here. Although in some of her essays from the 1960s she employed this descriptive analysis for subjects that she disparaged, in writing for *The New Yorker* she reserved this passion for dancing that she deemed of the highest order. Denby, by contrast, deployed his more documentary method of description universally, applying it to performances that did not engage him, as well as to those that did. Owing to this democratic application of his attention, his collected criticism seems more capacious and large-hearted than Croce's. Its tone is certainly cooler. The intensity that Croce can summon up on the page when something on stage has moved her is decidedly her own.

Although Croce demurs at accepting Denby's mantle, there is a dynamic relationship between her work and Denby's work that, to my knowledge, is unique in American dance criticism—a relationship in which the younger critic evokes the vision of the elder critic without resorting to imitation of his writing or compromising her own perspective in the theater. It is a link that calls into question any attempt to praise one while scanting the other. Indeed, the editor of *Writing in the Dark*, Robert Cornfield, who briefly served as editor of *Ballet Review* after Croce retired from it, bridges the two. He has been responsible for keeping Denby's work in print in book form over the past fifteen years. When I was asked to teach a course in dance criticism in 1996, the university bookstore reported that it was impossible to order any books by Croce, Denby, or Kirstein from any of their publishers. A couple of years ago, Cornfield sought to remedy the gap with a Denby reader, *Dance Writings and Poetry*; his space was limited and his enforced exclusions were heartbreaking, but it is thanks to him alone that we have any Denby dance writings in print at all. With *Writing in the Dark*, he has performed a similar service for Croce.

And, according to her introduction, he has done it without her help: the choice of essays to include, the editing-out of portions of them, the very focus of the collection on the *New Yorker* pieces, are Cornfield's decisions. This is different from Croce's previous collections, in the preparation of which she took an active hand, and the portrait of her as a critic is different, too. Perhaps thinking of the way in which the music critic B.H. Haggin assembled and edited Denby's early criticism to produce the monumental Denby of *Looking at the Dance*, Cornfield has very subtly yet quite decidedly reinterpreted Croce's career for us. His editing is itself an act of criticism to ponder.

For one thing, he has not accepted any received ideas about her. The list of them is considerable. Croce has been identified as a proponent of George Balanchine, to the exclusion of her views on any other choreographer. She has frequently been disparaged for her negative reviews of postmodern dance. Her refusal to applaud Alvin Ailey during the 1970s and 1980s, when his work became commercial and (in the years of his now well-documented drug addiction) grandiose, earned Croce the ugly charge of racism long before the publication of "Discussing the Undiscussable." Her refusal to applaud Martha Graham in the last decades of her career, when Graham was turning out dances that Croce deemed weak and self-parodic (most of which, in fact, Graham herself did not keep in repertory), earned Croce the charge that she had no understanding of modern dance. She has been accused of being unsympathetic to dancers whose bodies do not conform to a cookie-cutter, anorectic mold, and of having no tolerance for any kind of theatrical dancing apart from classical ballet. She has also been reviled as a political conservative in dance, on the evidence that she contributed to journals identified with conservative politics in the national arena. She has been attacked as an isolationist for refusing to adopt the term "multicultural."

Her pans of the New York City Ballet from the late 1980s on were especially costly, provoking the published wrath of Kirstein and ad hominem attacks from Peter Martins. Indeed, with the publication of her essay "Dimming the Lights" in 1988 ("And then there was *Stravinsky Violin Concerto*, in the worst shape I have ever seen it...."), Croce's editor at *The New Yorker*, Robert Gottlieb—who had worked for many years as a volunteer to the company, doing the programming, designing the publicity materials, and much else at Balanchine's behest—stood by his writer and resigned from the company's board of directors. In 1993, with "The Balanchine Show," her cri de coeur on the occasion of NYCB's "Balanchine Celebration" over what she perceived as the destruction of the Balanchine repertory under Martins's regime—"the ballets have had their hearts torn out of them"—Croce became notorious as a critic who

Master Hong Makes a Day of It

Old Master Hong, in a nutshell, was never wrong about Fong,
who lay like a lumber beyond the hill all day, there on his back
singing. Old Master Hong said brightly, *Move along! Move along!*

Old Master Hong can't be wrong for Fong. Move behind the hill, move
Brother Fong, or you'll be worried like a walnut! to which we
rattle our sticks—we are quick—and begin again then, like this:

Old Master Hong lay on his back in the fade with Fong. He said
nothing, and the insects took heart and multiplied. And we sat
a little off, en masse, and watched. Above our heads the clouds changed.

If a walnut falls on Old Master Hong/who will outwait Fong/
will it rain?/For I'm hungry, Master Hong—I have nine brothers!/
And ninety-nine others!/Will it rain? Hong says nothing. We wait.

On the thirty-seventh day, having built up our encampment,
and a system of rotation with numerical bases,
we adjusted our perspective to what we prefer to call

detached. This is to say, we cared for him like that, flat on his
back, out-waiting Fong, who sang like rain. Elder Wong says two more
days, pick up walnuts, bundle back. And we'd like to believe that

but the master he will wait! and outwit Fong who we now hate
to bother, having lately learned that he is singing. May
the lords of those thousands forgive us, who are mild, who are late.

Shawn Sturgeon

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supported only the past, a point of view that seemed to be consolidated by the fact that she was writing fewer reviews and had been immersed for well over a decade in work on a book about Balanchine's ballets. But the Croce that Cornfield presents does not quite conform to the figure at the center of these various maelstroms; nor is she quite as pessimistic about the future of theatrical dancing in general as the buzz on the Rialto would lead one to expect, though she is certainly grim on the future of ballet as a magnet for the imagination. (Croce locates "the end of the creative, progressive, apocalyptic ballet I'd known all my life" in 1989, the year that Kirstein and Farrell retired and Baryshnikov quit as director of American Ballet Theatre.)

IN ARRANGING THIS anthology, Cornfield appears to have been mindful of the end from the very beginning. For any anthology of critical works, the first review or essay sets the tone. *Looking at the Dance*, for example, opens with Denby's thunderclap review of Bronislawa Nijinska's masterpiece *Les Noces*, a piece of writing whose authority and austere economy of tone perfectly match those same qualities of its subject (which, nearly eighty years after its world premiere, is still in world repertories). It introduces Denby with a shock of brilliance. *Writing in the Dark* begins with "Joffrey Jazz," Croce's sunrise essay on Twyla Tharp's crossover hit *Deuce Coupe* of 1973, which the choreographer herself is planning to bring back in the near future. Another Tharp ballet for Joffrey, *As Time Goes By*, is pictured on the book's jacket: it is Tharp, a living choreographer whose work can be seen in the condition in which she wishes it to be seen, not Balanchine, who frames this selection.

Croce's pejorative Ailey review ("Ailey is a pop choreographer who no longer seems to train himself to the efficiency standards of popular art") is placed between the praise of Tharp and an intoxicated appreciation of Cunningham. The question this placement implicitly poses is, Did Ailey's work of 1973 measure up to Tharp's and Cunningham's of the same era? As someone who saw all of them at that time and who is familiar with the films of Ailey's dances and dancing from the 1960s, I would have to agree that he sold out something of himself in the 1970s in ways that Cunningham unquestionably did not and that Tharp, whose commercial ambitions were intense, also did not. (During a recent lecture on the production history of *Revelations*, even Thomas DeFrantz, an Ailey company archivist, noted mournfully some of the changes in the dance between its premiere and its performances, in the 1970s.)

And as hard as Croce was on Ailey, she could also be hard on Balanchine. "Blind Fate," written in 1974, the first review in this collection to address Balanchine's work, pulls no punches in stating its reservations about his choreography for *Divertimento* from *Le Baiser de la Fée*. Indeed, if Croce's essays on Balanchine were to be collected separately, you would see that, although she sponsored his art and that of his dancers, she was always wincingly direct in stating her reservations with respect to them. Farrell took it on the chin more than once in the early years. Balanchine's mysteriously distorting revisions of *Apollo* for television were not permitted to slip under the wire. Indeed, it is precisely because Croce registers the full diapason of her responses, even when they are conflicting, that "Heart of Darkness," her essay on *Robert Schumann's "Davidsbündlertänze,"* from 1980, is able to account for what makes the ballet poignant and fascinating even though, as she puts it, "The piece is not a hit; it doesn't want to be."

One emerges from Croce's writings with the sense of having been led though a city by a responsible, highly opinionated guide who is almost always an adult and who lives and pays taxes there. The reader is a tourist, but dancing is the writer's home. And readers of *Writing in the Dark* who know Croce's work well may note the absence of sections or postscripts that were included when the essays were first published in magazines or were first gathered in book form. This volume truly does represent Croce at her best, which means that it includes no review that does not make a larger point about some aspect of the field, no irritable discussions of dancers that are not absolutely necessary, no second thoughts by the writer about her own opinions. This is who Arlene Croce is: take it or leave it.

The fact that who she is here includes someone who could still enjoy, say, the production of Balanchine's *Jewels* in 1993 ("Miami's *Jewels*") or the dancing at American Ballet Theatre in 1996 ("Our Dancers in the Nineties"), while also believing that ballet as a creative art had been dead in the first case for four years and in the second case for seven years, is one of the most humanizing things about her. Those in the business of ballet who believe that her exequies over it have been premature have been given a splendid opportunity to prove her wrong. All they need do is to make ballets where the magic lasts and the dancers are nourished.

The ending of the collection is a gauntlet. Speaking of the Kirov Ballet's recent production of *The Sleeping Beauty*, which attempts to restore the work to its original

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condition of 1890, Croce writes:

> At the end of a century it has mostly had to sleep through, the Kirov wakes to find itself in the same predicament as every other classical company, but it has options the others don't have. One is to absorb the Balanchine ballets that are the century's masterpieces, part of the legacy from Petipa. As for *The Sleeping Beauty*, with the best will in the world, the company can only give us the Wagnerian side, not the Mozartean side. When it can dance that, the ballet will wake up, too, and recognize Maître Petipa in whatever guise he has come, and speak to him the words of the old tale: "Is it you, my Prince, you have waited a great while."

This paragraph is less than two years old. If Croce were seeing as much dance now as she once did, and if a publication that understood her demonstrated its need of her, I have no doubt that she would continue to report on this fantastic, this maddeningly elusive, and this eminently discussable art with the same surgical rigor and the same lustrous prose. She may be a pessimist, but she is a believer. ■

Blacks, television, and the decline of racism in America.

Gimme a Break!

By JOHN MCWHORTER

I.

LIKE DONALD BOGLE, I grew up in Philadelphia watching the increasing presence of black Americans on television. Bogle has some years on me, having been in attendance since the 1960s. My own memories of television begin in the early 1970s, when my mother demanded that I sit by her side to watch the new flood of black shows such as *Good Times*, *Sanford and Son*, and *The Jeffersons*, as well as mainstream shows attending to race such as *All in the Family* and *Maude*. And, of course, watching the entire run of *Roots* was a required rite of passage, even though it meant staying up past my bedtime for many nights in a row.

A part of this regimen was surely due to black Americans' cultural affection for television. As Bogle notes in his new book, *Primetime Blues: African Americans on Network Television*, a Nielsen survey in 1990 showed that blacks watched an average of seventy hours of television a week, and non-blacks watched an average of forty-seven hours; and it is certainly true that television was a more central ritual in my household than in the homes of my white friends. Yet my mother, a professor of social work, also considered black television a part of my early education in racial consciousness. She regarded the shows as a way to inculcate me with the basics of black history, and with the message that the whole world was not white, and that black America included many people not as fortunate as we were.

As we passed into the 1980s and 1990s, the black presence on television grew so steadily that had I been born later, it would have been impractical to try to find everything that blacks did on the tube. In the 1950s, white racists could be satisfied to find blacks on television only in the very occasional series, a few supporting roles, scattered variety show appearances, and one-shot dramatic productions from which they could easily avert their gaze. Today blacks are so numerous on television in all of its genres, represented in such a wide sociological and psychological range, that the same bigot would feel inundated by the objects of his scorn every time he turned on his set, and incensed at how sympathetically they are portrayed and how intimately they interact with whites.

PRIMETIME BLUES:
AFRICAN AMERICANS ON
NETWORK TELEVISION
by Donald Bogle
(Farrar, Straus & Giroux,
520 pp., $30)

I have always considered the history of blacks on television to be a clear sign that the color line is ever dissolving in America. But Bogle arrives at the opposite conclusion. His book concedes that progress has been made in a sheerly numerical sense, but it argues that overall the black presence on television has been an endless recycling of a passel of injuriously stereotypical images. It is a "Do the Right Thing" affair, exposing the eternal racism that always lurks behind allegedly positive developments that give the appearance of black progress. But Bogle's pessimistic argument is ultimately owed primarily to the ideological fashions of our moment. It cannot withstand a fair and thorough empirical look at the subject. It is a perfect product of the distortions, some of them benevolently meant, that have dominated the thinking of black intellectuals since the late 1960s.

BUT BOGLE'S EARLY chapters, on the 1950s and 1960s, are masterful, and they put one in mind of his accomplishments in his earlier writings. With *Brown Sugar*, which appeared in 1980, Bogle did the history of black popular entertainment a signature service with a smart survey of black "divas" from Ma Rainey to Donna Summer, bringing to the light of day the work of many figures who had faded from consciousness. His biography of Dorothy Dandridge was published in 1987, and it was a long overdue chronicle of the life and the work of this world-class beauty and gifted actress who was denied the career that she deserved by the naked racism of her era, and died in despair at the age of forty-two.

With the crisp prose and the masterful eye for detail that were evident in those books, Bogle now takes us through black television of the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, bringing to light performances barely recorded in accessible sources. Thus we learn that the very first experimental television broadcast by NBC in 1939 was not, say, a half-hour with Jack Benny, but a variety show starring none other than Ethel Waters. Bogle traces Waters's little-known but fascinating television career, which most famously included a stint playing the maid Beulah. *Beulah* was more representative of the black presence on stone-age television than its more frequently discussed contemporary *Amos 'n' Andy*, which even by the early 1950s was a tatty, recidivist affair rooted in an obsolete minstrel humor and thriving more on familiarity than on pertinence.

Beulah is remembered for depicting a black woman who has nothing better to do than center her life around the white

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family that employs her, other than waiting for her ne'er-do-well boyfriend, Bill, to propose. This was not an exclusively black convention, of course: Shirley Booth's Hazel on *Hazel* and Ann B. Davis's Alice on *The Brady Bunch* occupied similar spaces. What makes *Beulah* so excruciating to watch today is that Beulah is, in addition, none too bright. It is only with the thickest fortification of historical perspective that one can today endure the opening tags, in which Beulah looks us dead in the eye and offers such aperçus as the fact that she is "the maid who's always in the kitchen—but never knows what's cookin'...! HYEH HYEH HYEH HYEH...!"

In the show's original radio incarnation, the black domestic who became Beulah had been played by a white man; and for all of the discomfort that this arouses in us today, Marlin Hurt's portrayal is a guilty pleasure. Few could withhold laughter at the sound of his uncannily evocative giggles, laughs, wails, and intonations, picked up from his black childhood nursemaid. (Hurt was amazing: he later played the man Beulah worked for, as well as her boyfriend.) And on radio the character was no dummy, and got in her licks in Eddie "Rochester" Anderson style. Hurt died suddenly in 1946, and his replacement, Bob Corley, was merely adequate in the role; but when Hattie McDaniel took over in 1947, she infused the character with her signature spark.

The television version of *Beulah*, by contrast, was a glum and sodden affair, even for television of that era. The black character who had been largely at the center of the action in the radio show now took second place to the anodyne comings and goings of the white family for whom Beulah worked, which was even more disturbing considering that the family managed to out-Wonder Bread even the stock families that were then the rule in the sitcoms. Today Beulah's sidelining is especially hard to watch for its implication that these automatons are more interesting than she. The show went through no fewer than three (large) black actresses in the lead role: Ethel Waters, Hattie McDaniel, and Louise Beavers. Beavers, who played the role the longest, could barely conceal her lack of interest, walking through it as if she were in a children's play (which she was), and eventually leaving the role because she was tired of it. Having gone through all three of the leading black mammies in Hollywood, the producers simply folded up shop.

Bogle is correct in noting that the miraculous Waters managed to draw some kind of character out of the wan scripts. Waters's episodes are the only ones that can be even approximately tolerated today, as she conveys a kind of warmth and sexual affection between her and Bill, and manages to evoke an impression of will and intelligence despite what her lines have her utter. Throughout her life Waters could not help filling empty space with her charisma. Bogle movingly describes an episode of the usually frothy *Person to Person* in 1954, in which Waters diverted the interview into sincere psychological self-revelation. Waters was intense.

Indeed, one of the strengths of Bogle's book is his wise choice to cover television movies, specials, and guest appearances, since in the 1950s black performance history was made more in those settings than in the all-too-rare black series. Waters

"Beulah"

appeared in a number of dramas and specials, and in a savory episode of *Route 66* about the reunion of a group of jazz musicians (who included Jo Jones, Roy Eldridge, and Coleman Hawkins). The ex-boxer James Edwards enjoyed a brief eminence turning in nuanced and top-rate performances in numerous episodes of the drama anthology series that were popular in the decade. Sidney Poitier co-starred in the early black-white "buddy" drama *A Man Is Ten Feet Tall*, which was eventually filmed as *The Edge of the City*, with him repeating his role. Dorothy Dandridge, Sammy Davis Jr., the sadly forgotten Juano Hernandez, and Waters all found work in drama anthology episodes as well. It is easy to suppose that the only way to see blacks on television in the 1950s was on *Amos 'n' Andy*, *Beulah*, or Nat King Cole's short-lived variety show; but Bogle shows that viewers of the period saw somewhat more black performances on their screens than this, though far from enough.

II.

THE SUN BEGAN breaking through the clouds in the 1960s, as the civil rights era brought race relations and "the Negro question" to the forefront of American consciousness. Perhaps the most immediately memorable black figure of this era on television is Bill Cosby's erudite Scotty on *I Spy*, portrayed as every bit the equal of his white partner in undercover operations. From the vantage point of our identity politics, however, we instantly note the absence of any racial identity in Scotty, and this is largely true of other blacks in series of this decade, such as Greg Morris on *Mission Impossible*, Lloyd Haines on *Room 222*, and Nichelle Nichols's Uhura on *Star Trek*. For Bogle, as for many analysts, this reflected white America's desire to "tame" the Negro, who was beginning to be seen as a threat.

Certainly this was a part of the story—but it was not until the end of the decade that the salad bowl would triumph over the melting pot as the dominant metaphor for immigration in the minds of most Americans. In an era in which the central objective of civil rights leaders was still integration, many white producers and writers sincerely considered themselves to be doing good by portraying blacks without any particular "cultural" traits. Today, of course, the seams show, and the space to which blacks were assigned on television requires major historical adjustment.

Consider *The Dick Van Dyke Show*. It ventured an episode in which the Petries are accidentally sent home with another couple's baby, the couple having been left with the Petries' baby. The error is discovered, and the other couple come to Rob and Laura's house to make the switch. They turn out to be black. The audience screams with laughter. The handsome couple sit down; there are a few more jaunty lines of dialogue capped by some jolly topper, and the episode fades out with the two couples sitting there in the living room, all smiles. The producers' gesture was heartfelt; it was a fine liberal script. But I have always wondered: since the Petries surely did not just hustle the couple out the door once the babies were restored to their proper parents, what did they all talk about? We are supposed to assume that they simply interacted as "people," talking about mowing the lawn and the crowds on the train into Manhattan. But we also know that this era was a

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heartbeat beyond legal segregation, and that interracial relations were hardly simple, as they still are not. Only in the 1970s would sitcoms begin to explore what happened after that fade-out.

Drama shows were somewhat more concerned with addressing the tensions that would soon transform the integrationist imperative into a separatist one, though usually more in the name of economic and racial justice than in the name of what we call "diversity." Shows such as *The Defenders* and *The Nurses* often addressed the issues of race. In *East Side, West Side* Cicely Tyson made a lasting impression as a social worker sporting the first "natural" black hairdo on television. This show did not shy away from race-based episodes surprisingly rich for television of the era, and their casts included Diana Sands, Ruby Dee, and James Earl Jones. (One of Bogle's nervier opinions is that Jones is a "fake old windbag." I have always thought so myself, but I would never have said so out loud.) And Clarence Williams III's Linc on *The Mod Squad*, with his big Afro, thanks-but-no-thanks reserve, and "I don't fink on soul brothers" attitude, is certainly anybody's conception of a Black Man.

This is all a far cry from Beulah in the Hendersons' kitchen. Still, throughout most of the 1960s there was not a single "black show" proper. This changed in 1968 with *Julia*, starring Diahann Carroll; and the response to this show by black commentators signaled that a new era in black American ideology had arrived. *Julia* portrayed a middle-class widow raising a young son while working as a nurse. With the "assimilated" Carroll's chiseled features and crisp standard English, *Julia* wore the race issue lightly. There was only an occasional episode that depicted Julia encountering and defeating prejudice, which was portrayed as an occasional excrescence rather than the manifestation of a profound moral and social malaise.

Basically, *Julia* was a more sober version of its contemporary *That Girl*. And so black writers, actors, and critics fiercely condemned this little show for neglecting the tragedies of blacks in the inner cities. The Black Power movement was just then forging a new sense of a "black identity" opposed to the mainstream one, which promoted the suffering poor blacks—the blacks most unlike middle-class whites—as the "real" blacks. For this radical (but increasingly pervasive) view, middle-class blacks had some explaining to do. They had deserted their "roots."

The black response to *Julia* was predicated upon this new idea—it is now so deeply ensconced in mainstream black thought that it no longer feels like a "position" at all—that the essence of blackness is suffering. A middle-class nurse living in a nice apartment and interacting easily with whites was obviously "inauthentic." Objections to *Amos 'n' Andy* in the early 1950s were based in part on the fact that even if the show was undeniably amusing, this parody of black reality was one of the only depictions of blacks on television. By the time *Julia* aired, however, black misery and the new "black identity" were not exactly absent from American television.

"Amos 'n' Andy"

The problem now was not that *Julia* was the only view of blacks on television; the problem was that this side of black life did not deserve to be shown at all.

III.

Fifteen years or so earlier, the critics would have eaten up *Julia* with a spoon. A comparison with *Amos 'n' Andy* is again useful. Bogle presents a list of objections to that show by the NAACP—and in a full page of complaints, the fact that the show did not address black poverty is not even mentioned. Most black thinkers of the earlier period would have had no more interest in seeing black misfortune dutifully "explored" on television than white viewers had in seeing depictions of Appalachia or the poor rural South; and they would have applauded a portrait of members of their race doing well as a genuine advance from the "mammy" days. And yet the NAACP of the period was certainly interested in the problem of black poverty.

The difference hinged on the contrast between an ideology focused on achievement despite acknowledged obstacles and an ideology predicated upon the treacherous notion that achievement is an extraordinary affair of luck until all the obstacles are removed. This latter view—fatalistic, doctrinaire—instantly casts those people blessed with only ordinary capabilities and not with luck—that is, poor people—as the "real" black people. This ideology remains with us today, pervading the thought of most black American pundits and professors. Bogle is one of their company. In its discussion of *Julia*, his book suddenly begins a disappointing decline into a narrow and numbingly circular litany of complaint. Bogle frames the thirty remaining years of black work on television as an almost unbroken procession of veiled injustice and exploitation.

Bogle at this point falls into the same trap that mars his *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks*—or, rather, its revised edition. That book first appeared in 1973, and it was my first primer on blacks in film. It aptly identified five eponymous stereotypes running throughout black roles in American movies, making the useful point that the "blaxploitation" genre, whatever its visceral thrill and the work that it gave black actors, was in essence a recapitulation of the types on view as far back as *The Birth of a Nation*. But in 1989 Bogle updated his book and revealed himself as a man with a hammer to whom everything is a nail. What was a valid and penetrating thesis applied to blacks in film up to the early 1970s came to be reflexively applied to the next fifteen years of American popular culture, with no significant acknowledgment made of the stunning maturation of the black role on the silver screen that occurred during those years.

Is Eddie Murphy an exciting phenomenon, playing lead roles in film after film, and often producing films as well? Not at all, because he is sexually appetitive, and therefore he is merely a recapitulation of the oversexed black "buck" who chases the Camerons' young daughter off a cliff in D.W. Griffith's racist film. Was Lonette McKee's performance in *Sparkle* a signature piece of acting? Not quite, because she is light-skinned, and therefore her sad fate in the plot renders her a "tragic mulatto," despite her character's not being of mixed race. And so on. Richard Pryor, speaking for the ghetto, gets one of Bogle's

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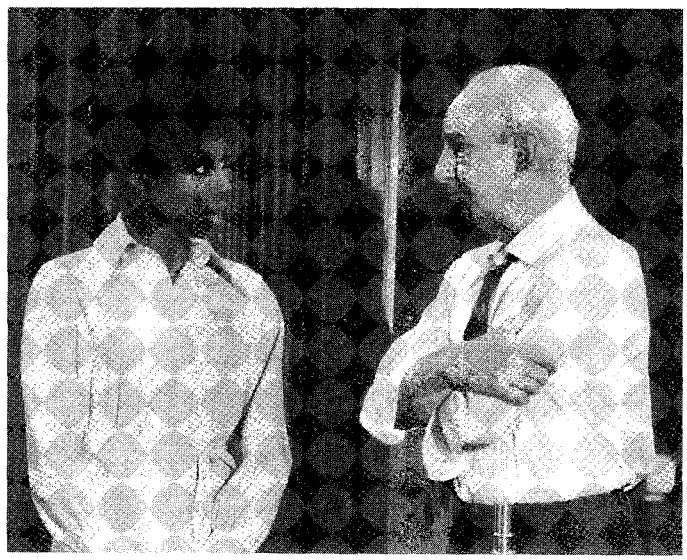
rare stamps of approval—but with the ominous qualification that he may exemplify a new type aborning, the "Crazy Nigger."

BOGLE PIGEONHOLES ALMOST every black contribution to American television from 1970 to 2000 into one of several dogmatic categories. As a result, his inquiry degenerates into a game that one might call "Can You Find the Stereotype?" As the years wear on, the relation of Bogle's analysis to the reality that it is describing grows more and more slender. All large, nurturing black women are "mammies," mere recapitulations of Hattie McDaniel and Beulah. This type includes even Oprah Winfrey, whose inspiring success is thereby rendered suspect. Any feisty black woman who speaks her mind to men is a "Sapphire," the idea being that the Kingfish's shrewish wife on *Amos 'n' Andy* established a "stereotype" about the black female that is now best avoided. And so our pleasure in watching LaWanda Page's immortal Aunt Esther on *Sanford and Son* or Nell Carter's lead character on *Gimme a Break!* must be a guilty one.

Nurturing middle-aged black men are also evidence of racism eternal. I recall a black drama professor speculating a decade ago that the rotund stature of the black television fathers James Avery (*The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*) and Reginald Vel-Johnson (*Family Matters*) signaled the emergence of a new stereotype to replace the "mammy," which he called the "pappy." The similarity of those actors' body shapes turned out to have been a coincidence, and there has arisen no trend in casting fat black men as fathers. Yet Bogle, too, seems primed to find a "pappy" stereotype in the air, dutifully griping that (normal-sized) Lou Meyers's wonderful portrait of a grumpy but loving cook on *A Different World* was "something of a fussy mammy-like character." Meanwhile, the feisty black man, such as Eriq LaSalle's Benton on *ER*, represents the Angry Black Man, or the Other; but the black man or black woman who does not stick up for the race is egregiously deracialized, and an example of "tokenism at its worst" (Julia, or Brian Stokes Mitchell's "Jackpot" Jackson on *Trapper John, M.D.*).

I assume that Bogle would prefer to see a happy balance between rage and quiet coping; but he comes up with a way to condemn almost every attempt in this vein. When Blair Underwood's Rollins on *L.A. Law* begins one subplot by avoiding a race-based view of a case, then rises into the politically correct indignation, and finally withdraws into an ambiguous stance in the end—a pretty good depiction of how many successful blacks feel about matters of race issues now—Bogle chides the writers for taking the character "back to the mainstream shore." Avery Brooks's solemn, insular, culturally rooted "Hawk" on *Spenser: For Hire* is a fascinating character, in Bogle's view, but ultimately he is racially (and therefore morally) neutralized in lending his services to his white partner rather than working against the mainstream.

In Bogle's doctrinaire framework, it is all but impossible for any black performance to pass as kosher. Instead the analysis of every black character is a "damned if they do, damned if they don't" exercise designed more to feed the flames of indictment of the white man than to illuminate any actual truths. *Benson* was indeed a little dicey in depicting an intelligent, middle-aged black man as a butler in a governor's mansion as late as 1979. Within two years, however, the show's writers had Benson elected state budget director; eventually he became lieutenant governor; and finally he ran against the governor himself. The series ended with Benson and the governor awaiting the election results together. One would think this series aggressively negated the Beulah stereotype, even at the expense of some plausibility. What counts for Bogle, however, is that the show ends with Benson "by his good white friend's side." Physically, yes—but he was watching the progress of an election in which he had attempted to unseat the man from his livelihood! How would Bogle have contrived his analysis if the series had ended with Benson watching the returns by himself?



"Julia"

It gets worse. If a show addresses racism in history (*Homefront, I'll Fly Away*), then Bogle takes it to mean that racism is safely confined to the past. But then if producers had refrained from depicting slavery and segregation on television, surely Bogle would have decried this as "whites denying the wrongs of the past." Meanwhile Bogle repeatedly dismisses as "self-congratulatory" shows in which whites denounce racism—though a black character who wears racial indignation on his sleeve merely restores us to the Angry Black Man. In Gary Coleman's savvy comments about racism in *Diff'rent Strokes*, Bogle detects the message that such comments are acceptable "*only* out of the mouths of babes," when in fact black adults had been sounding off about racism for a decade on other shows. This is not serious engagement with a cultural development. It is the promulgation of professional underdog-ism in black America, and as with most such work, it is accomplished only at the expense of empirical seriousness.

IV.

THIS BENDING OF the facts extends to a tendency to read supposedly coded winks into performers' work when the evidence does not support such an interpretation. Bogle is fond of the notion that all black actors of the past were quietly seething at the roles that they were forced to play. There is some truth to this; but as in all historical inquiry, the idea that "they were really just like us" risks becoming an utterly ahistorical idea. In this way, Bogle seems to imply that black experience and black ideology have remained the same over time.

Thus he analyzes Hattie McDaniel's tendency to hold the viewer at a distance as evidence of her "anger and frustration." But Bogle is looking at McDaniel through the post-civil-rights era lens. McDaniel actually took a practical and unruffled view of her maid roles, famously remarking that "I'd rather make seven thousand dollars a week playing a maid than make seven a week being one!" She made no statements suggesting the pent-up fury of later figures such as Lena Horne; she was even a leader of a contingent of black actors who protested the NAACP's post-war condemnation of blacks' roles as servants in Hollywood. McDaniel needed the work, period; and she did not live long

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enough to experience the change in the ideological tide in the 1960s. She may seem unenlightened by our standards, but our standards were not her standards.

One of the last major black performers to fall on the other side of the ideological line was Diahann Carroll. When she was making *Julia*, she told *TV Guide*: "Of course! *Of course, I'm a sellout.* What else would I be? I've sold my talents for a job I'm not particularly crazy about.... *Isn't that what you do? Isn't that what most people do?*" And as late as the late 1960s, it was. There were not many choices available to blacks; and the magnitude of the obstacles that were placed before them would have made the cultivation of perpetual rage a self-destructive mistake. No, the old-time Hollywood black actors did not love the constraints that were placed upon them—but few of them were inclined to parse their lives as sagas of victimhood. That is a luxury of a later time—of our time.

ONE OF THE saddest results of the ideological straitjacket that Bogle imposes upon black television is that it blinds him to some remarkable and historically important performances. In *Gimme a Break!* in the early 1980s, Nell Carter played a live-in housekeeper to a widowed white police officer (Dolph Sweet), and became essentially a surrogate mother to his children. In Bogle's account, "For African American viewers, *Gimme a Break!* was little more than a remake of *Beulah*." But this is only what Bogle and assorted black commentators chose to make of it. The show was quite popular in the black American community, and it owed its popularity not least to the fact that its resemblance to *Beulah* was only superficial.

Beulah was meekly deferent to her employers, but Nell brooked no nonsense from the Chief. Bogle may read this as a revival of "Sapphire" (despite Nell's decidedly unsexual rapport with Sweet), but most of us simply enjoyed seeing a black woman holding her own against a white man. Beulah never knew what was cookin', but Nell ran the house to such an extent that the show barely skipped a beat when Sweet died during the run. Beulah's life outside the house was a cipher, but Nell was depicted as dreaming of a singing career, and Carter could really sing. (I can hear the party-faithful Bogle asking why black people always have to sing and dance; but if Carter hadn't been allowed to use her amazing voice, he would certainly have complained of the suppression of her talent.)

Nell was given a black female friend, and Bogle dutifully compares this to Beulah's empty friendship with the simpleton Oriole. But if no such friend had been cast, then we would be back to the sin of "deracialization"; and Carter's chemistry with Telma Hopkins's Addy was so electric and genuine that my mother, who was exquisitely alive to the realities of racism and taught college courses on the subject, regularly commented on how racially "real" their friendship was. This extended to their pointed but affectionate spats, which Bogle sees as more hints of Sapphire, but which my mother accurately read as reflective of the black "fussing" tradition. (The scenes would not have rung true with white actresses.)

"Gimme a Break!"

Bogle sees mammies everywhere, especially in performances that deserve better. *What's Happening!!* was hardly Molière, but little Danielle Spencer contributed a bravura deadpan performance as the tattling little sister, and it is fondly remembered by all blacks who watched the show. For Bogle, however, she was merely a "young mammy in waiting." *A Different World*'s episode with Diahann Carroll as middle-class Whitley's mother and Patti LaBelle as down-to-earth Dwayne's mother was one of the casting coups of television history: LaBelle, not a trained actress, acquitted herself of the role so brilliantly that it led to her being given her own series a few years later. But for Bogle, LaBelle was "mammy" redux, because she is dark and not small. Thea Vidale's short-lived sitcom of the mid-1990s gamely tried to depict some genuine issues for a single black woman raising children on a tight budget, but because Vidale is a big, dark woman—well, you know. Few vintage performances are immune from Bogle's straitened standpoint. Sherman Hemsley's loudmouthed George Jefferson is a retread of the "coon," regardless of the joy that black audiences regularly felt at the sight of Hemsley's strutting bantam entrance into the lobby of his and Louise's new "dee-luxe apartment in the sky" in the opening credits, which seemed to encapsulate the prospect of advancement without a surrender of pride. Hemsley's cocky yet contoured reading of what could have been a shallow, shrill character was most of what kept this silly show going for eleven seasons.

OWING TO HIS fixation on "stereotypes," Bogle cannot tolerate black versions of television tropes that are considered unexceptionable in mainstream venues. A group of urban, (mostly) upwardly mobile twentysomething friends congregating mainly in one improbably opulent Manhattan apartment, some of them eventually hooking up: sound familiar? Indeed, *Living Single* was precisely a black *Friends* (though it predated it by a season), and at its height it was a hilarious bonbon of a show. Bogle solemnly criticizes the characters' obsession with sex; as well as the transitoriness of their relationships. But most young sitcom characters are obsessed with sex; and television writers have traditionally refrained from giving characters permanent attachments because such new characters interfere with the chemistry of the show, and narrative plausibility would usually dictate that the show itself would have to end. How likely was it that an attractive woman such as Mary Richards would have no long-term involvements for six years? Yet for Mary to have remarried would have meant a different (and probably doomed) show. For Bogle, however, what is business as usual in a white show is racism in a black show.

One of Bogle's oddest analyses in this vein is his take on *Living Single*'s resident airhead, Synclaire. Comparing her to Marie Wilson in *My Friend Irma* and to Suzanne Somers in *Three's Company*, Bogle complains that "you had to ask why a Black woman on television should be stuck with a white woman's formulaic leftovers." But few people under seventy—

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including the people who made *Living Single*—have even heard of *My Friend Irma*, a minor hit sitcom of radio and television in the 1940s and 1950s, forgotten as soon as it left the air in 1954. Suzanne Somers's Chrissy would certainly have been a vivid memory; but Coles's warm, quirky Synclaire bore only a formal resemblance to that jiggly cartoon. Surely Coles did not study for her performance by holing up at a video archive to sit through flickering old tapes of *My Friend Irma*. If Chrissy and Synclaire and Irma had anything in common, it is that they originated in a television convention: the stock sitcom dumbbell.

Similarly, if white couples argue (*Roseanne*, *Married ... with Children*) it is refreshing, but Fred Sanford and Aunt Esther's chitlin' circuit feuding is nothing but a return to the Kingfish and Sapphire. I must say that I adored Aunt Esther, as many black viewers did, seeing in her an endearingly broad exaggeration of bits and pieces of any number of black women whom I have known. It is not obvious to me that I should regret the many pleasures that this character brought me because of an academic parallel to a character from a show created forty years before I was born. Fred and Esther's relationship, along with the relationship between the Kingfish and Sapphire, may be traced more plausibly to an ancient cliché in popular entertainment, the henpecked husband and the shrewish battle-ax wife. (Fred and Esther are uncannily reminiscent, for example, of the old comic strip "Bringing Up Father.") In Fred and Esther I see not a statement about middle-aged black people, but a statement about America and its tortured, hilarious history of relations between the sexes.

V.

IT IS HIS separatist ideology that ruins Bogle's pleasure. It is also what keeps him from ever addressing the paradoxical nature of his expectations, such as his implication that there should be a moratorium on black participation in certain entertainment clichés long beloved by audiences of any extraction, including black Americans. One comes away from Bogle's book with the impression that he considers black television to have a special therapeutic mission from which the rest of television is exempt. In *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks*, he proposed that "black films can liberate audiences from illusions, black and white, and in so freeing can give all of us vision and truth. It is a tremendous responsibility, much greater than that placed on ordinary white moviemakers"; and at the end of *Primetime Blues* he considers television to have "a long way to go in honestly and sensitively recording African American life."

And so Bogle reserves his highest praise for *The Cosby Show*, and for the brooding, quirky, and still-missed 1980s "dramedy" *Frank's Place*, and for the *succès d'estime* drama *I'll Fly Away*, which depicted a black maid working for an integrationist white lawyer in the segregated South of the 1950s. Ever vigilant against the mammy stereotype, and imbued with his evangelical conception of black television, Bogle also appears to have a particular predilection for low-key, dreamy black women, heaping special praise on Louise Beavers of *Beulah*, Gloria Reuben of *ER*, Regina Taylor of *I'll Fly Away*, and Lisa Bonet of *The Cosby Show*.

Working with this, we can construct a

"Sanford and Son"

future that would presumably meet with Bogle's approval. All black television series would portray financially stable people infused with a combination of intellectual curiosity and good old-fashioned mother wit. All characters would regularly display passionate commitment to uplifting the blacks left behind, while at the same time participating in mainstream society—but with a healthy dose of "authentic" anti-assimilationist resistance as well. All characters would be romantically fulfilled, but within the bounds of carefully considered serial monogamy. Humor would be low-key, avoiding any hint of "raucousness," yet always with one foot in African American folk traditions. Mothers and wives would be portrayed by small, light-skinned women, preferably of dreamy affect, who would never engage their husbands in anything but the most civil conduct. Black characters in mainstream programs would at all times refrain from "nurturing" whites and would display a primary rootedness in black culture, while at the same time refraining from going as far as being perceived as "angry" or as "the Other." In sum: all black shows would essentially be recapitulations of *The Cosby Show*.

I CHERISHED *The Cosby Show* in its early years for gracefully depicting a black family whose lives were not defined by impecuniousness or tragedy: here was where black America was headed, rather than where it had been. Yet the common consensus among black commentators, as Bogle notes, was that the show carried an implication that the black underclass was a marginal issue. Maybe it did. But the real problem was that the show became downright dull. "That's just Ozzie and Harriet," my father groused during its first season. The show's "statement" was eloquent, but after a while it became a weekly sermon, and hard to recognize as entertainment.

Sanford and Son, by contrast, was entertainment. But under Bogle's rule, this show would have had Lamont working his way out of Watts by attending college, while Fred took continuing education classes alongside, all the while giving his white teachers hell as he resisted "assimilation." Instead of giving work to his old chitlin' circuit friend LaWanda Page, and thereby surrendering to the "Sapphire stereotype," Redd Foxx should have let her languish in obscurity while casting a petite, reserved, light-skinned woman—probably given to spells of wide-eyed reverie—as Aunt Esther, with her and Sanford getting along warmly. The show should have been an hour-long drama, so that it might more fully "explore" the "personas" and "issues." In later seasons, Lamont should have entered the corporate world.

But who would have watched this show, or another like it? It is fine for entertainment to be edifying, but it must also be entertaining. Moreover, Bogle's requirements for entertainment would make it even less true to life than he now thinks it is. For there is no room for natural human exuberance in Bogle's ideal. Surely an essential aspect of African American experience—its amazing vitality—would go missing if all black shows were of the gentle and genteel tone of *The Cosby Show*, *Frank's Place*, and *I'll Fly Away*. Consider Bogle's ideal of "dreamy" women: really, Louise Beavers was never much of an actress; and even Bogle notes Gloria Reuben's "flat voice"; and most viewers considered *A Different World* to have hit its stride only when the similarly flat-voiced Lisa Bonet left the show. I confess that I prefer LaWanda Page to

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Lisa Bonet any day of the week. And I doubt that I am alone.

This is, after all, commercial television. In the eternal tug-of-war between art and commerce in popular entertainment, commerce has always come out on top, even if art occasionally slips through. More to the point, popular entertainment has always been founded upon character types, from Pierrot and Harlequin to Sapphire and the Kingfish. To assail all such black personages as "stereotypes" is intellectually irresponsible—unless one is prepared to accuse, say, West African villagers of trucking in "stereotypes" in keeping alive the stock characters in their culturally central folk tales. Why is Anansi, the wily spider at the heart of tales passed down the generations in Africa and the Caribbean, any less a stereotype than George Jefferson? This point is all the more significant given that black writers are as complicit as white writers in promulgating these "stereotypes," as Bogle surely agrees.

Bogle is too familiar with popular entertainment and its history not to understand this. But this means that his proposition that black television must shoulder a unique and "tremendous responsibility" cannot be taken seriously, except as another cry of victimhood. That "tremendous responsibility" is just another way to keep black readers eternally indignant at perceived racism in America. Bogle's chronicle of fifty-plus years of black television is more a reflection of the centrality of victimhood to modern black identity than an accurate history of race in this medium and this time. If you put an African American of the 1950s before a television set in 2001, he would surely be stunned and elated by the evidence of progress that would pass before his eyes.

Bogle is hardly alone in his approach to black television. There now exists a whole literature of books and articles by black writers playing endless rounds of the "Can You Find the Stereotype?" game. This impulse to uncover rot behind all black success runs so deep in so many black writers that many might find it difficult to imagine just what else a survey of black television could be about. Yet there are many, many things that Bogle and the others neglect, because they do not fit the arc of a victimologist's argument.

Thus Bogle zips perfunctorily by the welter of black sitcoms on the new UPN and WB networks. True, the shows put a new low in lowest common denominator, operating at a ding-dong *Laverne & Shirley* level that has been foreign to most white sitcoms since about 1980. And yet these shows are extremely popular with black viewers. The people who recently made a boisterous cartoon such as *The Parkers* the top-rated show among blacks do not share Bogle and his comrades' idea of an evening's entertainment. While Bogle waits for "honesty" and "sensitivity," millions of other African Americans are happily sitting down to *Homeboys in Outer Space*, *The Wayans Bros.*, *Malcolm & Eddie*, and their ilk.

These sitcoms have been very popular with black audiences, while richer fare, such as the heavily black and highly regarded *Homicide*, has not fared so well; and this is a fact that is worth exploring. Bogle is correct that there has always been a sad dearth of black dramas as opposed to black comedies—but surely this is in part because black audiences have repeatedly been less likely to take them to heart. There are rich issues of culture, class, tradition, and psychology to be mined that could engage even the most essentialist-minded of writers. But Bogle falls short here, preferring to malign the nerdy character of Urkel in *Family Matters* as "deracialized" for not infusing his persona with any identifiable "blackness."

"Good Times"

Empirical studies have suggested, contrary to the common wisdom, that blacks are not depicted as criminals on television today out of proportion to their representation in the population. I would have liked to see Bogle ponder this question, charting the evolution of the black criminal on television (in the 1950s, the criminal was usually a working-class white) and possibly refuting the studies in some way. And perhaps because they do not lend themselves to the "Can You Find the Stereotype?" game, Bogle largely neglects black variety shows after Flip Wilson, when these shows, especially in the 1970s, contributed some definitive moments for black viewers. Who could forget little Janet Jackson's imitation of Mae West on *The Jacksons* in the mid-1970s? I also fondly remember Telma Hopkins and Joyce Vincent Wilson's savory skits as working-class Lou-Effie and Maureen on *Tony Orlando and Dawn*.

I do not wish to suggest that there is no basis for an anxiety about stereotypes. I cannot find a positive word to say about Jimmie "J. J." Walker's sad takeover of *Good Times*, even though I was one of the kids in the schoolyards shouting "Dy-no-MITE!!!" And too often black cast members are the ones with the least defined personas, a notable current example being Victoria Dillard's Janelle on *Spin City*, a character whose facelessness after six seasons would be unimaginable in any white character on any program. And yet we are a long, long way from Andy and the Kingfish—a long way even from Scotty.

And why, we must ask in the end, is the issue so urgent at all? To be sure, popular entertainment has an influence upon the formation of identity in America; but the stereotype obsession presumes something more. It presumes that anything short of a "sensitive" and "honest" depiction of black experience constitutes an obstacle to black advancement. This, I think, is a very brittle claim. Granted, it was hardly a picnic when practically the only image of blacks on television was *Amos 'n' Andy*. But given the profoundly richer and more positive situation today, it is difficult to argue that only Bogle's ideal would discourage a black youth from using drugs, or lead a young black woman to work harder in school, or raise the rate of blacks opening small businesses. Quite the contrary. A great many individuals and groups have worked their way up in American history despite the ugly stereotypes in popular entertainment.

In other words, it's just television. Real life happens outside the little box. Yes, there is evidence that television can affect behavior. But if, between 1970 and 2000, blacks had been depicted only "sensitively" and "honestly" on television, their

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history during the period would certainly have unfolded exactly as it did, with the same ratio of triumphs to setbacks. The assumption that television must carefully reflect reality, and even airbrush reality, but never exaggerate or parody reality—and that it must do so only in the case of blacks—is unwarranted by history or psychology or politics; and it represents a gross misunderstanding of popular entertainment. No form of entertainment has ever achieved such representational justice, and the implication that black Americans are helpless without it renders us passive victims rather than masters of our own fates.

Yet Bogle's book will surely stand as the authoritative source on the subject. It will be endlessly borrowed from university libraries by black undergraduates in classes on "Race and the Media," dutifully writing papers illuminating the "stereotypes" underlying almost anything anyone black has ever done on television. Black thinkers—many of whom, like most busy intellectuals and journalists, do not actually watch much television—will continue to decry "the scarcity of positive portrayals of blacks in the media." And the NAACP will continue to harangue the big networks—which are watched by fewer people each year—as racist for not happening to have included black characters in a particular season's lineup. Never mind that blacks are all over the myriad shows on the dozens of other stations now available on cable, as well as in shows from past seasons on the big networks themselves. (The networks, of course, will eagerly accept their guilt and quickly cast black actors in roles written as race-neutral—with the result that their shows will include various black-white "friendships" devoid of any natural chemistry, as on *The Weber Show*, where the seasoned stage and film actor Wendell Pierce cavorts perfunctorily with white actors looking as if he walked in from some other show, or worse, like a "Negro" token circa 1966. The show's white writers, hip to the "deracialization" gospel, have made certain to include the occasional exchange acknowledging the character's color, which in such a lightweight show only makes the falsity of the whole business stand out even more.)

But, as I say, it's just television. Regardless of the essentialism of thinkers such as Donald Bogle, the African American community is well on its way past its old radical platitudes to a truly integrated—dare I say "deracialized"?—future, which is the only future possible. And for the fortunate people in that future, *Primetime Blues* will serve as a poignant document of a time when black thought in America was unwittingly dominated by an appetite for self-defeat. ■

Before the Storm

By FRITZ STERN

Theodor Fontane: Literature and History in the Bismarck Reich by Gordon A. Craig

(Oxford University Press, 232 pp., $35)

IF THERE IS a heaven, and if in heaven there is a writer's corner, and if it is justly administered, it should include Theodor Fontane, the great German poet, journalist, critic, and novelist of the nineteenth century, even if he is little known in the English-speaking world. Suppose further that Fontane, in heaven, discovers that a historian, and an American one at that, has written a deeply knowing account of his work: he would be startled by the affinity, and also pleased by it, though he would be a bit puzzled that a scholar of the twentieth century has grasped an earlier life with such fine empathy. And we earthbound people can be grateful as well: Craig has produced a splendid introduction to the whole range of Fontane's work.

Scenes of nineteenth-century German life come alive as Craig looks over Fontane's shoulder, affectionately and critically. In this book, composed of crisp, connected essays and punctuated by bemused personal asides, Craig devotes a chapter to each stage of Fontane's life, and he does so with scrupulous intelligence and evident pleasure. Neither affinity nor affection thwarts his critical sense, and so we learn not only of Fontane's literary strengths but also of his occasional lapses.

The author and the subject of this book are memorably matched. Fontane was born in 1819 in Neuruppin, a small town in the mark Brandenburg, quite close to Berlin. Craig was born in Glasgow in 1914. As a boy he came to the United States, and in 1935, when he was a student at Princeton, he visited Hitler-enthralled Germany and almost instantly recognized (unlike so many other people) the terrifying threat of the new regime. In his professional life, he gradually moved from a concern with the political and military history of Europe to an ever-deepening study of modern Germany, becoming a master Germanist. For decades Craig has cherished his "love of German literature"; he has made exemplary use of literary sources in his historical work, and all this knowledge has given him an unusually rich understanding of the German past. His work reminds us of the now neglected principle that literature and history are, or ought to be, inseparable.

Both Fontane and his modern critic moved through their worlds with a deep knowledge of the past and a sharp, trained eye on the contemporary scene. But the affinity goes further, and touches on the connection between history and literature. Fontane was an apothecary's son who briefly and half-heartedly followed in his father's footsteps but early on discovered his literary calling and his passion for history, fortified by admiration for the works of Sir Walter Scott. He read some of his early efforts to a fabled literary circle in Berlin called "Tunnel over the Spree" (the Spree being the river crossing Berlin), the very name suggesting the group's ebullient unconventionality. Several stints in London as press attaché at the Prussian embassy and as a journalist gave him a chance for extensive travel in Scotland. His first important published writings were great ballads on themes from Scottish history—no wonder that a century later they would appeal to a Scot, and to a man himself steeped in literature and literary criticism.

Later Fontane turned to other subjects and other genres. For several decades he was a theater critic; and then, when he was almost sixty years old, he began his career as a novelist, finishing in two decades nearly twenty works, some of them masterpieces that have been praised as the only German equivalents to the works of the great European novelists in the realist tradition. Until Fontane came along, the German reading public preferred the tame and the anodyne, the endless idealization of reality in fiction. Fontane caustically called it *Verniedlichung*, or prettifying.

In the 1860s Fontane began writing what turned out to be four volumes of travel sketches, *Wanderings through the Mark Brandenburg*, which treated the

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sparse agricultural land north of Berlin, with its sturdy folk, its pine woods, its countless lakes. Brandenburg was one of seven electorates of the Holy Roman Empire, a pawn in the game of European politics, and often contemptuously called "the sandbox of Europe." This was the cradle of the Prussian state: in the seventeenth century, the Hohenzollern electors successfully practiced the art of state-building in Brandenburg, and in 1701 the elector of Brandenburg was proclaimed king in Prussia. (Germans are about to launch a grand, uneasy commemoration of the three hundredth birthday of the Prussian monarchy.)

With his sharp eye and his chatty, affectionate tone, Fontane depicted Brandenburg's towns and villages, its churches and cloisters, its ruins, and its great historic moments that shaped the Prussian ethos. He had a genius for evocative writing, for what he called "the animation of locality." For Fontane, Brandenburg was an enchanted world, and a century later Craig retraced these wanderings, giving his own impressions of landscapes both disturbed and undisturbed by war and by the Communist dictatorship of East Germany. Of one castle, Fontane wrote: "Individuals die, the whole remains." And Craig comments: "He was, of course, incapable of imagining what a totalitarian regime driven by ideological zeal and ill-conceived notions about the requirements of planned economy could do to a small treasure...."

FONTANE HAD BEEN on the liberal side during the revolution of 1848, but in the next two decades he wrote for conservative newspapers in Berlin. Following Bismarck's bold efforts to preserve the powers of the Prussian monarchy by unifying Germany and adding the imperial nimbus to the Prussian crown, he served as an observer-journalist in what turned out to be the three wars of German unification: against Denmark, against Austria, and against France. Craig, who has written a vivid account of the central battle in the Austro-Prussian War of 1866, gives a judicious summary of Fontane's works about these wars. He appreciates Fontane's mastery of the technical aspects and, more important, his sense of the uncertainties of battle, of the role of accident and crisis—of what is caught in "the cloud of unknowing," to use the old mystical phrase that John Keegan has revived for the description of war. And he suggests that Fontane, in his intuitive way, arrived at some of Clausewitz's conclusions about the confusion on the battlefield, about the decisive element of morale among individual soldiers and their units.

Craig rightly emphasizes Fontane's evenhandedness, especially in his account of the Franco-Prussian War, during which he briefly fell into French hands, as he could not resist slipping into Domrémy to visit Joan of Arc's birthplace. Bismarck intervened with neutral powers to obtain the writer's release. But still he wrote fairly and with balance about the contending foes, and this very balance, like his praise for French courage, was in sharp contrast to the appalling triumphalism that the Prussian victory instilled in the new *Reichsdeutsche*. As Fontane put it, "The French army—and this cannot be said often enough—was excellent. Never had the Empire, either the first or the second, placed anything better in the field. The enemy was defeated by a power that was superior to him in numbers, in self-confidence, and above all in leadership. The armies themselves were equal."

THE VICTORY OF 1871 marked the birth of a new German militarism, in spirit and in political structure, which quickly gave a strident chauvinistic tone to what in many ways was a burgeoning civil society. Fontane offered only muted criticism of Germany's arrogance toward the French. Nietzsche, it will be remembered, feared that the same arrogance would lead "to the extirpation of the German spirit," and even the aloof Jacob Burckhardt was afraid that soon "all of world history beginning with Adam would be painted in victorious German colors, oriented to 1870–1871." The critics were right, of course: Germany's distorted view of that victory clouded what had once been a clear Prussian sense of realism. Bismarck preserved a prudent clarity in foreign policy, though less so at home, and less so as he aged in office. Craig dwells shrewdly on Fontane's ambivalent judgment of Bismarck: he was impressed by the chancellor's talent and courage, and distressed by his self-pitying pettiness and lack of magnanimity. Fontane's reflections on Bismarck and his time remain invaluable, as I have found in my own work.

Beginning in the early years of the new Reich, when Schiller's dictum that the stage was a moral institution still held sway in society, Fontane became a regular theater critic. His independent, impressionistic reviews often carried didactic messages. Craig cites one in which Fontane contrasted the patriotic bathos of playwrights with the courage of Prussian soldiers in battle in Lorraine and concluded: "Now we *have* Alsace and Lorraine and can, without any particular loss, give up one thing in return: our old world position as general leaseholder on morality."

During his decades as a reviewer, Fontane revealed a remarkable openness to the new, the modern, even the radical. He wrote reservedly of the early, daring plays of Ibsen and admiringly of Hauptmann, who to the displeasure of the imperial establishment stripped away the pieties surrounding sexual matters or the "idealistically" prescribed inequality of women in bourgeois life. One should add that Fontane generally displayed a cheerful receptivity for the young and the new, a temperamental strength that sustained the extraordinary energy of his greatest literary labors.

FONTANE WAS NEARLY sixty when he began writing novels. The first one, which appeared in 1878, was called *Before the Storm*, and was set in Prussia before and during the Napoleonic Wars. There followed in amazing rapidity the great portraits of contemporary life, much of it in Berlin, Fontane's home. Among them: *The Woman Taken in Adultery*; *Delusions, Confusions; Beyond Recall*; and *The Poggenpuhl Family*, certainly the greatest such works before Thomas Mann. In some manner all of these novels deal with the foibles and the wounds of changing class relations, with the temptations of eros and the strictures of society.

While Fontane had a deep affection for the virtues of the old Prussian aristocracy, he noted its decline in wealth and style as the nineteenth century progressed. His novels depict the rise of a wealthy and insecure middle class, some of whose members had the parvenu's repellent qualities. Many of his novels, especially the great *Effi Briest*, dwell on the place and the plight of women caught in the conventions of a male world that, among its other failings, bowed to the idolatry of an empty concept of honor. In an almost equally great novel, *Frau Jenny Treibel*, Fontane portrays a woman who exemplifies the pervasive hypocrisy of German bourgeois life, as she prattles of the highest ideals and plots for the biggest returns. (What Frau Treibel pursues in this fictional model, Cosima Wagner represented in real life: the pretense of sublimity, the practice of calculation.) In a letter that deserves mention, though Craig does not cite it, Fontane summed up his deepest disgust: "We are stuck up to our necks in all manner of conventional lies and should be ashamed of the hypocrisy we practice, the false game we play."

Even more than the other great nineteenth-century novelists with whom Fontane is often compared—more than Balzac or Dickens or Trollope—Fontane used dialogue and conversation to define

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character and situation. He made the reader listen to authentic colloquial voices, suggesting a range of meaning, a depth of drama, best left undefined, as it often was to the speakers themselves. Such was his gift of *Plauderei*, of easily assimilable conversation, that snippets of his dialogue have become part of German speech.

CRAIG WROTE THIS book for his German publisher to bring out in the centenary of Fontane's death. He has made no concessions to the Anglo-American reader, who deserves to have an explanation for the references that may be clear to Germans but obscure to everyone else. It is a pity, moreover, that in so meticulous a book there are a large number of misprints. (The name of Effi Briest's husband is consistently misspelled!) Perhaps it would be churlish to ask for more in a book that does so much so well in such a short compass, but two important themes are barely mentioned: Fontane's Huguenot background, and his deep ambivalence concerning the Jewish presence in German life.

Fontane was a descendant of French Protestants whom the Great Elector, Frederick William, invited to Brandenburg in 1685, after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, and who so immeasurably enriched the rather sparse life of what was to become the kingdom of Prussia. A descendant of exiles, Fontane admired rootedness and loyalty. By his origin and even more by his intellectual life, he reminds us how deeply German culture was embedded in European life.

A sharp social observer, Fontane could not avoid remarking upon the spectacular and embattled rise of German Jewry. Though the subject is hidden in most of his novels, he dealt with it explicitly in his extensive correspondence, and quite often in his letters to his friend Georg Friedländer, a judge whose Jewish grandparents had converted to Christianity. In 1885, for example, Fontane wrote to him: "Just as my dislike of the agrarian spirit—East Elbian squirarchy—steadily grows, so does my dislike of the Jewish *spirit*, which is something entirely different from the Jews." He noted with regret that Jews had a predominant stake in Berlin real estate and in other parts of the German economy. He disliked opulence and pride in material things, and he deplored Berlin's rich Jews and what he considered to be their vulgar devotion to Mammon.

But the picture is complicated. Fontane often acknowledged the Jews' salutary influence on German culture—and their particular enthusiasm for and assistance to him. In 1891 he quoted to Friedländer a remark made to him by a professor:

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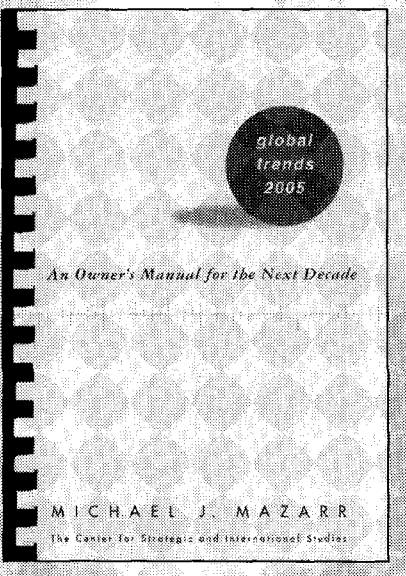
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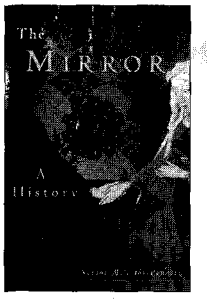

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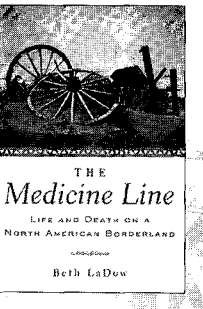

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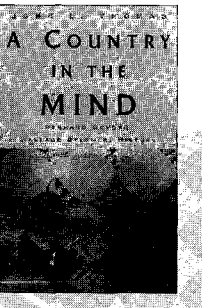

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ROUTLEDGE

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"Strange, the Jews among us do the work of German culture, and the Germans offer anti-Semitism as an exchange gift." And this was his gloss on the comment: "Colossally correct, unfortunately, the first part even more correct than the latter." In sum, Fontane might be classified as either a mild philo-Semite or (almost exclusively in his correspondence) a harsh anti-Semite—which only demonstrates how little those terms explain.

Fontane remains a German presence, more as the genial, understanding writer than as the critical, even disillusioned man whom we encounter in his correspondence. The title of Günter Grass's recent novel *Too Far Afield* alludes to the last line of *Effi Briest*. The utterly conventional Frau von Briest has asked her appealing, independent-minded husband whether perhaps they, *too*, have been guilty in their daughter Effi's tragic end. The old man replies, "Leave it alone, Luise ... that is *too* wide a field." Shortly after the self-liberation of East Germany, at a meeting in Potsdam in 1993 at which writers and historians debated the question of guilt relating to the two German dictatorships, I cited that last line, arguing that though it might be appropriate for the lives of individuals, it was an inadequate response to the issue of collective responsibility. At a small lunch afterwards, a distinguished East German writer responded with fine East German irony to my allusion: "Oh, that terrible Fontane! I must reread him all the time!"

Gordon Craig's book should inspire the same resolve: we should read and reread Fontane—in the few translations that are available—for aesthetic pleasure and historical instruction, and as an indispensable commentary on a still-peaceful Germany with its moral and political dilemmas only partially concealed. And for further instruction we should read Craig's historical works as well. They belong together, the affinity holds. ■

Ethicism

By PETER BERKOWITZ

Conflict of Interest in American Public Life by Andrew Stark

(Harvard University Press, 352 pp., $49.95)

A LEADING JOURNALIST married to a well-connected member of the foreign policy wing of the executive branch arrives on the scene eighteen hours ahead of a surprise American military operation, beating her colleagues to the breaking story by a full news cycle. A prominent professor's faculty votes to offer an appointment to a distinguished scholar from another university with whom the professor is having an affair. A critic who has proved himself quite capable of discoursing at length about the myriad ways in which a fine writer has gone astray reviews a friend's book and finds in it relatively little to reproach and much to admire. A consultant to the White House involved not only in publicizing policy but also in making policy quits his job and, scarcely breaking stride, turns up on television offering commentary on the administration whose policies he has only recently been devising and disseminating. A holder of high office makes herself a multimillionaire by signing a nearly record-setting book contract with a powerful New York publishing house whose parent company is likely to have a substantial stake in government business that will come before her in her official capacity. In the waning hours of his administration, while packing his bags and preparing to leave town, the president, circumventing customary procedures, uses the kingly prerogative of pardon entrusted to him by the Constitution to grant immunity from prosecution to an indicted billionaire who fled the country to avoid trial for criminal tax fraud and whose socialite ex-wife hobnobbed with the president, and lobbied him on her ex-husband's behalf, and contributed big bucks to the president's party.

Such lamentably familiar scenarios arouse a vague sense of uneasiness (and in some instances produce a lasting stench), though it can be a challenge to put your finger precisely on the reason. In any of these cases it would be rash, without more information, to infer wrongdoing. But it is right to detect a specter of wrongdoing hovering over each of these cases, a distinguishing mark of the morally compromised and compromising condition known as "conflict of interest."

But "conflict of interest" is something of a misnomer. In fact, without constituting what we commonly call a conflict of interest, interests conflict all the time. You must decide whether to marry for love or for money. You wish to advance your career but also to spend quality time with the kids. You seek to lose weight and to develop abs of legendary definition even as you want to dine out every night, eating and drinking to your heart's content. In these situations, and in an infinite variety of others that crop up every day, interests conflict in such a way that satisfying one interest necessarily impinges upon the satisfaction of another.

What distinguishes a conflict of interest from situations in which interests conflict is the interest's conflict with a demand of duty or an imperative of justice. The paradigmatic cases of conflict of interest occur in the performance of professional roles. A conflict of interest afflicts a judge who presides over a lawsuit to which a friend is a party, because the judge's interest in seeing his friend prosper is likely to interfere with the obligation to administer the law impartially. A conflict of interest enmeshes a professor who becomes romantically involved with a student in his class, because the professor's capacity to fulfill his responsibility to evaluate all his students fairly is directly threatened by the temptation to prefer—or to punish—his romantic interest. A conflict of interest besets an investment counselor who finds himself in a position to make a killing by dumping a powerful client's declining shares on a less powerful client, because the investment counselor owes complete and accurate information to all his clients.

It is a curiosity of conflicts of interest that the conduct that they isolate is not in itself unfair or criminal. We can imagine, if with some strain, a judge meting out justice as impartially to friends as to strangers, and a professor managing to evaluate all of his students—including his romantic interest—fairly, and an investment counselor giving sound advice to competing clients. This is not to say that the notion of conflict of interest fails to isolate a real wrong. The wrong of conflict of interest, the wicked or criminal conduct, consists in occupying a position in which one is exposed to a powerful temptation to act in an unfair or criminal fashion.

Accordingly, conflicts of interest are dependent on broad generalizations about the vulnerabilities and the weaknesses of human nature, and they are also acutely sensitive to context. They arise in an endless variety of circumstances, but the determination of whether and in what

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way any particular set of circumstances constitutes for a specific individual a conflict of interest often requires supple thinking and a reliable moral compass. Fortunately, supple thinking and a reliable moral compass are just what Andrew Stark brings to bear in his admirable book on the types of conflict of interest that arise in American public life, the laws that govern them, and the moral and political principles that inform and confuse conflict of interest law.

STARK'S BOOK HAS roots in a hybrid and relatively new academic discipline known as professional ethics. All the best universities now have scholars ("ethicists") and courses devoted to research in this burgeoning field, which specializes in analyzing the moral dilemmas that arise for doctors, lawyers, business executives, and politicians as they do their jobs and carry out their professional responsibilities. Unlike many in the field, Stark forgoes the pleasures and the comforts of abstraction. He does not undertake to provide a moral formula or to construct a procedural framework for separating the innocent from the guilty. Without begrudging the ambition or questioning the aspiration, he leaves it to others to derive universal moral principles that define "fair terms of social cooperation" and to apply them to various fact patterns in order to ascertain the morally correct verdict.

Far from seeking to tidy up what he calls "conflict of interest discourse," Stark makes it his aim to account for the thicket of law and moral judgment in which the actual discourse—the laws, the political debates, the public discussions—is in fact entangled. His book can on occasion get academic in the bad sense—lumbering and dense, proliferating definitions and distinctions, confusing pettiness with precision. And his analysis displays common limitations of the field of professional ethics, in particular its impoverished understanding of liberalism and its highly attenuated conception of democracy. Still, Stark does honor to his discipline by winning a number of valuable and unexpexcted insights from his immersion in the nitty-gritty of real-world public service and its complex opportunities for wrongly benefiting oneself and others, and for being wrongly accused of wrongly benefiting oneself and others.

The big thesis of Stark's book is that in the last fifty years or so the discourse about conflict of interest in America has undergone two apparently contradictory but intimately connected changes. On the one hand, the conflicts governed by conflict of interest law—self-dealing, undue influence, abuse of office, private payment for public acts, private gain from public office—have become increasingly objective: well-defined, specifiable in advance, and applicable to all. On the other hand, the interests regarded as inappropriate, once primarily pecuniary, have become increasingly subjective: imprecise, psychological and ideological, and dependent upon how the person in question views the particulars of the situation. Both the objectivization of conflicts and the subjectivization of interests, Stark sets out to show, reflect pressures exerted by those features of American liberalism—devotion to individual rights, tolerance, the rule of law, and the reluctance to establish a single authoritative conception of the public good—that remain, in his view, constitutive of American political culture as a whole.

BUT THE BULK of the book, in which Stark lays out a taxonomy of conflicts of interest and provides a topology of the discourse, does little to advance this big thesis. Instead, the case studies demonstrate a second thesis, substantial and noteworthy in its own right. Though he does not clearly articulate it, the vindication of this second thesis represents perhaps Stark's principal contribution, with ramifications not only for how conflict of interest discourse is best understood but also for the way the discipline of professional ethics ought to be practiced. Call it the "centrality of judgment" thesis: that deciding the hard cases involves the exercise of a form of judgment that resists reduction to a rule or formula or theory. Such judgment consists, rather, in a weighing and evaluating of particulars, an application of cross-cutting principles to ambiguous and incompletely understood circumstances, an organization of the passions that serves reason and not rationalization.

The formidable array of questions that Stark culls from the past couple of decades of public discourse reveals that there is no shortage of hard cases:

> Should we penalize officeholders for allowing the mere appearance of impropriety to arise surrounding their official activities, even if they have engaged in no actual wrongdoing? Should we investigate officials' personal character on the assumption that doing so will shed light on their public performance? Should we curtail public financial disclosure as an affront to officials' privacy or, alternatively, rely on it as the only remedy necessary for conflict of interest? Should we punish officeholders for profiting privately

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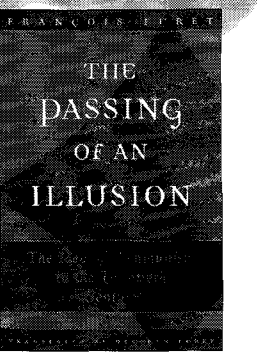

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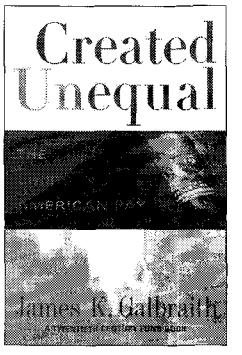

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from public office even if they could not possibly have compromised their official performance in the process? Should we regard officials who take positions inconsistent with their personal interests as courageous or, alternatively, as hypocrites? Should we treat those who adopt views compatible with their interests as self-serving or as reassuringly genuine? Should we encourage congressmen to share pecuniary interests with their constituents, on the grounds that their doing so will make them better representatives? Should we worry that officials' beliefs, predispositions, and commitments can, under some circumstances, be every bit as encumbering of their judgment as their pecuniary interests? Should we restrict the careers of officials' spouses in any way, and if so why? Should we visit particularly heavy restrictions on officials who leave government to work for foreign as opposed to domestic-owned businesses, and if so why?

Consistent with the centrality of judgment thesis, Stark's answer is always the same: yes and no, depending on the particulars. But Stark does not oppose the proffering of formulaic answers in a formulaic manner. Instead he shows theoretically why judgment is inevitable, and uses his cases to illustrate judgment in action.

Consider Stark's analysis of the "perils of prophylactic law." He approves of, and elaborates, Blackstone's classical explanation of the scruple at the core of conflict of interest law: "no temporal tribunal can ... fathom the intentions of the mind otherwise than as they are demonstrated by outward actions, it cannot punish for what it cannot know." And yet, as Stark observes, the very purpose of conflict of interest law is to prevent encumbered or tainted mental states. The solution is to prohibit actions—the receiving of gifts, the making of certain contacts—that, given what we know about human nature and social and political life today, are likely to impair official judgment or make it irresistibly easy for an official to use his office to improperly advance inappropriate interests. The peril of prophylactic law is that it will rely upon the lowest common denominator to establish its expectations concerning human weakness and its baseline for determining illegality:

> One might sympathize with Anthony Lewis, who—bristling at the conflict of interest charges leveled against then-United Nations ambassador-designate Richard Holbrooke—insisted that "[e]*veryone* knows that Richard Holbrooke is ambitious—but not for money. The notion that he would try to gain improperly from the use of a [rent-free] room in a friend's house is laughable, as is the idea that he had financial motives when he met American diplomats abroad."

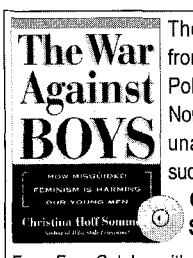
But to defend him, Lewis was forced to appeal to Holbrooke's internal dispositions and motives, the very sort of appeal to mental states that prophylactic conflict of interest laws seek to avoid.

Disconcerting reversals abound in conflict of interest discourse. Consider Stark's discussion of the complex relation between policy views and subjective interests. Limousine liberals are criticized for supporting welfare programs and other progressive state measures while personally enjoying the comforts that wealth brings. In contrast, comfortable and wealthy country-club conservatives are criticized for advocating tax cuts from which they will directly benefit. While limousine liberals are taken to task for hypocritically supporting political positions that are at odds with their personal interests, country-club conservatives are reproached for selfishly adopting a political position that furthers their personal interests. And yet, as Stark deftly points out, perhaps limousine liberals should be congratulated for overcoming self-interest to champion policies they think just but from which they will not benefit. And perhaps country-club conservatives should be applauded for scorning to dissemble and honestly advocating for their entire society policies they think right, whose benefits to them are plain.

That appearances can be exasperatingly misleading and routinely susceptible to contradictory interpretations heightens the difficulties associated with a relatively new entry into the arena of conflict of interest discourse: "the appearance of official impropriety." It is understandable, as in *Wild* v. *U.S.* (1982), that the Department of Housing and Urban Development would contend (correctly, according to Judge Richard Posner's ruling for the Seventh Circuit) that HUD's prohibitions on the appearance of official impropriety were violated by an employee whose dilapidated rental properties qualified him as a slumlord. And the political justification for the appearance standard is also understandable. After all, how can we maintain confidence in our public officials if their private conduct flies in the face of their public responsibilities? And yet the appearance standard raises troubling moral and legal questions. Whereas a conflict of interest involves exposure to temptation, the appearance standard makes unlawful the creation of the impression in others that one is so exposed. But whoever heard of punishing someone for appearing to speed, or steal, or assault?

In the face of these perplexities and many others that he assiduously investigates, what does Stark think ought to be done? Those who believe that the real practicality of professional ethics consists in devising dramatic reforms and crafting novel laws will be disappointed. For Stark remains steady in his purpose, calling in the end for measured judgment, disciplined by a knowledge of morality and politics and law, concerning the circumstances under which the impairment of an official's judgment should be subject to reprimand or criminal sanctions.

It is not for want of rigor or perspicacity that Stark refrains from drawing bright lines and issuing clear-cut judgments. Indeed, his achievement is to analyze rigorously and perspicaciously the destabilizing ambiguities, and the fluid boundaries, and the chameleon-like concepts that cause the lines in the discussion of conflict of interest to be shifting and obscure and the judgments to seem slippery and so often in danger of collapsing in on themselves. He leaves the reader



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not with a method for producing right answers but with a refined appreciation of the subtleties of the question, and therefore better equipped to draw decent lines and craft defensible judgments.

IN LAYING BARE the twists and turns of contemporary conflict of interest discourse, Stark also provokes mischievous questions, including some about the conflicts of interest that afflict those whose self-proclaimed task it is to clarify them, the professional ethicists. Who will evaluate the ethicists? Others lack the professional expertise, the status, and the resources. And the ethicists, curiously, seem to lack the interest. How else to explain the remarkable fact that while platoons of professors busy themselves with minute and exhaustive examination of the ethics of other people's professions, they have left their own profession's ethics virtually unexamined?

Surely academic life generates an abundance of ethical dilemmas and conflicts of interest. Are "mandatory sensitivity training" sessions for freshmen and speech codes for all a legitimate effort by universities to create an unthreatening intellectual environment, or are they anathema to the vigorous and free exchange of ideas on which liberal learning depends? Is it proper for professors to assign their own books, thereby force-feeding their views to the class while lining their pockets at students' expense? What rules and regulations should govern the increasingly common circumstances in which a spouse in the administration exercises power over, and participates in the making of decisions affecting the material and professional interests of, his or her spouse on the faculty? Why, in the process known as peer review, do university presses inform scholarly referees of the identities of the authors whose books they are evaluating for publication but keep the identity of the scholarly referees hidden from the author, a practice that invites scholarly referees, under the cover of anonymity, to reward friends and punish enemies? What kind of process is due students in disciplinary hearings and faculty in grievance procedures? What justifies the institutionalized dependency of graduate students on senior faculty—a relationship without parallel in other professions, in which the younger professional, after more than half a decade of professional training, teaches his teacher's undergraduate students and provides research and clerical assistance for his teacher's scholarly projects in exchange for an occasional audience with the adviser, less than a living wage, and highly uncertain job prospects?

Could it be that the professors of professional ethics have neglected to examine urgent and obvious questions about academic ethics, the examination of which would appear to be a matter of professional duty, in order to protect their interests—to shield the system that has so richly rewarded them from systematic scrutiny? And if the professional ethicists did decide to examine their own profession's ethics, would it not be reasonable to infer that their interests would impair their judgment and preclude them from examining the issues impartially and accurately? Such at least are the sort of mischievous questions provoked by Stark's adroit analysis.

STARK'S STIMULATING INQUIRY fails to account adequately for the tendencies in contemporary conflict of interest discourse that he brings to light. In his view, it is the liberalism that we share that has caused the conflicts covered by conflict of interest law to have grown increasingly objective and the interests deemed suspect to have grown increasingly subjective. Our liberalism compels us to view conflicts objectively, for fear of policing thought: to avoid intruding into the realm of opinion and conscience, we prohibit not states of mind that may impair judgment but various classes of objective relationships likely, given what we know about human nature, to make good judgment or impartial judgment impossible. And we are constrained to view interests subjectively, since our liberalism forbids us to establish a common conception of the public good, with the result that any particular person's interest must always be determined on a case-by-case basis and with reference to his or her circumstances and beliefs.

But hallowed liberal principles prohibiting efforts to regulate thought cannot alone explain the growth in the variety of the conflicts that are now publicly recognized. This growth is also a function of our tendency to legalize moral and political questions, to seek objective and impartial rules and regulations to govern an ever-growing range of controversies, no matter how knotty and delicate. The quest for legal solutions is driven in part by a loss of faith in the reliability of our officials' internal moral compasses, which perhaps reflects our increasing doubts about the effectiveness of our own moral compasses. As good democrats, we believe that our officials are like us, and that is why we worriedly turn to law. Thus it is not only liberal concerns about privacy but also democratic doubts about the efficacy of the conscience that spur us to bring an increasing variety of relations under the aegis of conflict of interest law.

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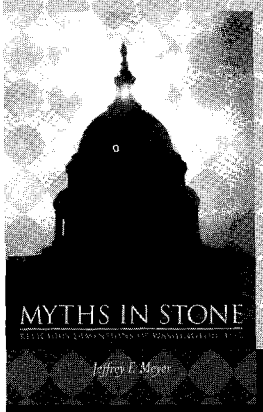

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Nor can the liberal repudiation of the idea of a public good explain why we view an increasingly wide range of subjective interests with suspicion. For one thing, no such repudiation is inherent in liberalism. Unfortunately, Stark embraces the communitarian canard that liberalism lacks a conception of the public good, a piece of scholarly flimflammery that over the last couple of decades has proven to be as resilient as it is false. Locke could not have been more clear in the first chapter of the *Second Treatise of Government*, nor could Jefferson in the second paragraph of the Declaration of Independence have conveyed more succinctly, what the fabric of our political life demonstrates: that the public good in a liberal democracy is the system of laws and political institutions whose purpose it is to protect the rights that all individuals share. Yet while we share a liberal *public* good, democratic doubts about the authority of a *greatest* good, and the capacity of individuals to transcend the particulars of identity and circumstance, compel us to focus attention on the forces—psychological and sociological—to which all individuals are equally subject. Democracy hates distinctions; and what better way to insure equality than to interpret each as equally under the sway of impersonal forces, filtered though they be by one's subjective experiences and one's personal point of view?

CONTRARY TO THE impression created by Stark's book, liberalism is much more than a theory that sets out legal limits on the exercise of government power, and democracy goes beyond establishing by whom government power is exercised. Modern liberalism, which puts freedom first, provides a moving principle and a spring of action. It gets under your skin, enters your blood, penetrates to the bone. It inflects perceptions, feelings, thoughts. It is a way of life. While it can recognize and even admire other goods, modern liberalism demands that they must all eventually bow before freedom's authority. Much the same could be said about modern democracy, to which modern liberalism is wedded; but modern democracy's moving principle and spring of action, the good which it puts first and before which all others must defer, is not freedom but equality.

For most of us, freedom and equality are non-negotiable and inseparable. But they also make an unstable pair. We tend to understand democratic equality in terms of liberal freedom: we are equal in regard to our rights. But we tend to understand our liberal freedom in terms of aristocratic superiority: we are free in the sense that we need submit only to our own reason and desire. To get to the roots of the morally compromising condition that we call conflict of interest, it would be necessary to explore how we play off—in public life no less than in private relations—our hunger for freedom against our commitment to equality, and how they collaborate to play off our various interests against each other and the claims of duty and justice.

TO GET TO the roots of conflict of interest would also require an extended examination of the very notion of self-government, which includes both what we commonly think of as politics, or the rule of individuals over other individuals, and what we commonly think of as personal morality, or the rule of the individual over himself. In the famous tenth paper of *The Federalist*, James Madison, echoing Locke, gave expression to the idea that self-government depends on laws that prevent public officials from advancing their interests at the expense of others and the public good:

> No man is allowed to be a judge in his own cause, because his interest would certainly bias his judgment, and, not improbably, corrupt his integrity.

Yet Madison immediately makes clear that conflict of interest is no more removable from democratic self-government than selfishness is from the moral life:

> With equal, nay with greater reason, a body of men are unfit to be both judges and parties at the same time; yet what are many of the most important acts of legislation but so many judicial determinations, not indeed concerning the rights of single persons, but concerning the rights of large bodies of citizens? And what are the different classes of legislators but advocates and parties to the causes which they determine? Is a law proposed concerning private debt? It is a question to which the creditors are parties on one side and the debtors on the other. Justice ought to hold the balance between them. Yet the parties are, and must be, themselves the judges; and the most numerous party, or in other words, the most powerful faction must be expected to prevail. Shall domestic manufacturers be encouraged, and in what degree, by restrictions on foreign manufacturers? are questions which would be differently decided by the landed and the manufacturing classes, and probably by neither with a sole regard to justice and the public good. The apportionment of taxes on the various descriptions of property is an act which seems to require the most exact impartiality; yet there is, perhaps, no legislative act in which greater opportunity and temptation are given to a predominant party to trample on the rules of justice. Every shilling with which they overburden the inferior number is a shilling saved to their own pockets.

Madison's words should be sobering for those who indulge the hope that refinements in theory will someday enable us to purify our politics of partiality and perfidy. Interests can be arrayed against interests, and ambition can be organized to counteract ambition. Shrewd institutional design can eliminate egregious conflicts of interest and mitigate others, but they can never be entirely overcome or removed from our politics, for the simple reason that the causes of conflict of interest are inscribed in our nature and presupposed by our political institutions.

To conclude his book, Stark borrows with minor caveats Judith Shklar's striking words in *Ordinary Virtues*, her quirky and incisive study of liberal character, which she described as a "ramble through a moral minefield, not a march toward a destination." Shklar's captivating metaphor evokes the dashing image of a fearless academic inquirer. It also dissimulates, and disguises a certain abdication. For one cannot pass through a minefield, moral or otherwise, without loads of luck and much careful planning, years of study, and expert execution. It is reckless to suggest otherwise.

Like Shklar, Stark exhibits a salutary skepticism about the facile hope that drives so many of his colleagues: that theory, if it is carefully enough calibrated and finely enough tuned, can throw the errors of others into sharp relief and release us from our moral dilemmas. But one would not want such skepticism to become the justification for the creation of a new intellectual no-trespassing zone, legitimating a truncated exploration of the principles that motivate us to action, give tone and texture to our desires, and color and constrain our politics.

There is a time and a place for everything, and the intellectual world requires its division of labor. But when and where better to explore the principles that move us and their practical ramifications than here and now, when everybody feels the craving for personal freedom but even progressives are skeptical about liberalism's integrity and viability, when the just claims of equality appear self-evident even to elites but across the political spectrum citizens are losing sight of the moral conditions and the moral limits of democracy? To be truly practical, ethical inquiry must also be philosophical. ■

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You deserve a factual look at...

Ariel Sharon

Will his "yad chazak", his strong hand, bring peace?

Ariel ("Arik") Sharon has now been elected Prime Minister of Israel. He decisively defeated Ehud Barak, who lost the election even though he had close to 100% support from the Israeli Arabs. Israel's Jews, having at long last understood the futility of the Oslo Accord "peace process" and of the appeasement of the Palestinians, were ready for a radical change. But Ariel Sharon is much maligned, often called a murderer and a war criminal. There are three myths that his detractors propagate.

What are the facts?

Myth #1: The war in Lebanon. Sharon's enemies accuse him of having launched the "Peace for Galilee" War in Lebanon in 1982 unnecessarily and without knowledge or permission from Prime Minister Menachem Begin. But that is nonsense, of course. Israel, in contrast to all Arab states, is a democratic country, governed by civilian authority. Not even a presumed "warlord" (as Sharon is regularly titled) could start any military action, let alone a full-blown war, without the full approval of the government. The war in Lebanon, reviled though it may be now, was at the time an existential necessity for Israel. An intense and vicious civil war between the Moslems and the Christian Maronites was going on in that country, a civil war that began in earnest when the PLO entered Lebanon in 1970. They established their own "mini kingdom" in that unhappy country. Over 100,000 people were killed. From their base in Lebanon, the PLO had launched innumerable terrorist attacks against Israel and was poised for a major invasion. When Israel "invaded" Lebanon, the Lebanese civilians, delighted to be freed from the terror of the PLO, greeted the Israeli soldiers as their liberators, with flowers of happiness and hope. Sharon led his victorious troops to the outskirts of Beirut. He refrained from entering Beirut itself only because of the tens of thousands of casualties it would have caused, most of them Lebanese. Under pressure of world opinion -- mostly, sad to say, that of the United States -- he allowed Arafat and his PLO to escape to Tunis, where they were poised to plan further mischief and destruction that destabilizes the Middle East until today.

Myth #2: The Massacre of Sabra and Shatilla. The gravest accusation against Ariel Sharon is that he condoned or perhaps even instigated the massacre of about 800 Lebanese Moslems in the Sabra and Shatilla refugee camps. The reality is that the perpetrators of this horrific crime were Christian Falangist murderers, who by stealth invaded these camps and acted in revenge of the assassination of Lebanon's president elect, Bashir Jamayel. Sharon's detractors claim that he should have been aware of this assault or that he was aware and did nothing to prevent it. But nobody outside the camps could have known what was happening, because the invading Christians used no guns -- only knives in perpetrating their crimes. Not a single shot was fired. *Time* magazine published a story on the events, in which it clearly accused Sharon of complicity in this horrendous crime. Sharon sued Time for libel -- and won. But the slander that Sharon was responsible for the massacre has not died down and continues to be assiduously propagated in Arab and Moslem media and also in much of the rest of the world.

> "The 'yad chazak' -- the strong hand of Ariel Sharon -- is needed to bring peace with security to Israel and to the Middle East."

Myth #3: The "Al Aksa Intifada". The current Intifada -- the bloody uprising of the Palestinians against Israel -- did not, as the media like to report, start with Ariel Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount. That visit, which had been arranged beforehand and which had been "approved" by the Palestinian Authority, was simply a pretext. This uprising, which could be called the "Rosh Hashanah War of 2000", actually started days earlier, on September 23, 2000, when a Palestinian policeman killed point-blank his Israeli counterpart, with whom he had been on patrol two days earlier. Mr. Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount was simply the signal to start this uprising, which voluminous intelligence proves to have been planned way in advance. And why shouldn't Sharon, why shouldn't any Jew, be allowed to visit the Temple Mount, which, with its Western Wall, is the holiest site for all Jews, the focus of all their longings? Any Arab can visit any place, any holy place, including the Western Wall, in any part of Israel without being questioned and without being molested. What is it with the Moslems that they go berserk if a Jew visits one of their holy sites? To blame Sharon for provoking and starting the Al Aksa Intifada makes as little sense as to believe that World War I would not have started had Arch Duke Ferdinand not been assassinated in Sarajevo.

The media is mounting a smear campaign against Ariel Sharon, describing him as an out-of-control warmonger, a man on a perpetual warpath, someone who, if elected, would not hesitate to use troops against the Palestinians and all other Arabs. The reality is that Israel desperately needs Sharon. He is an Israeli hero, who played a decisive role in Israel's brilliant victory against combined Arab might in the Six-Day War, who, with his bold thrust into Egypt, encircled that country's Third Army in the Yom Kippur War and thus turned near-defeat into glorious victory, and who, in his various ministerial roles, has performed fearlessly and most successfully. After the disastrous regime of Ehud Barak, a man who was intimidated by President Clinton and who was putty in the hands of Arafat, the "yad chazak" -- the strong hand of Ariel Sharon -- is needed to bring peace with security to Israel and to the Middle East. The Arabs in Palestine, Syria, and all the rest will know that this is a man that cannot be pushed around, but also that any agreements that he will enter into will be scrupulously kept. Welcome, Arik, as Prime Minister of Israel!

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

If I Were a Rich Man

Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise? Is not he thy father that hath bought thee? Or so I thought as I scummily read through Jack Quinn's scummy e-mails and discovered that they are, alas, primary sources for the study of contemporary Jewry. It turns out that it is not our father that hath bought us, but a certain fugitive financier in Switzerland who has masterfully defeated the American system of justice by adducing his support for every Jewish cause in creation. Yeshivas, hospitals, dance companies, businesses, museums, universities, theaters, peace groups: Are there Jews anywhere who have not taken some of Marc Rich's money to the bank? If so, it was an oversight. Contact the Rich Foundation, 4 Weizmann Street, Tel Aviv 64239 immediately. So many Jews, so little time.

As a consequence of all this largesse on the lam, his lawyer was able to present the president with a pile of Jewish testimonials proving to a moral certainty that Mrs. Rich's ex-husband is the last of the just. The e-mails document the frantic and somewhat hilarious search for righteous Jews. From the director general of Rich's foundation to Rich's lawyer in New York: "We have jews and non-jews—from Spain & Switzerland, etc. and even a palestinian minister of health. The last letter from A Burg (Speaker of the Knesset) & Israel Singer (President of the W[orld] J[ewish] C[ongress]), which was not included in the petition book and was sent directly to potus reflect Israel & Diaspora communities." From same to Rich's lawyer in Washington: "Shimon Peres confirms that he talked to potus on Monday Dec 11th who 'took note' of his intervention." From same to same: "I met Rabin's daughter today. She is going to call potus tonight or tomorrow." From the lawyer in New York to the director general in Tel Aviv, bizarrely: "We need a rabbi among the people in the [White House] counsel's office." From the lawyer in New York to the lawyer in Washington, on the subject of getting Senator Clinton involved: "You know of Abe Foxman and of the Israeli connection and of all the giving and of the Brooklyn connection." This is my favorite, from the director general in Tel Aviv to the lawyer in New York: "Bob, having Leah Rabin call is not a bad idea. The problem is how do we contact her? She died last November." And on and on, until endorsements were produced by, among others, the chief rabbi of France; Rabbi Irving Greenberg, the chairman of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council (Bob, can we count this as six million?); the holy heads of Talmudical academies in Israel and America; the mayor of Jerusalem and the former mayor of Jerusalem; the mayor of Tel Aviv and the former mayor of Tel Aviv; the famously principled Shulamit Aloni; and all the other brothers and sisters whose effusions of gratitude and admiration will eagerly be provided by Representative Burton's office. None of them allude to the eponymous financier's illegal business with states that are consecrated to the extermination of the Jewish state.

The pardon of this exemplary son of his people by Bill Clinton, who did his best to hide behind the Jews in his sophistical appearance on the op-ed page of the *Times*, has revealed some highly disennobling characteristics of the Jewish community: for example, the increasing usurpation of the authority of teachers and rabbis by the authority of philanthropists and politicians. Writing a great Jewish check does not make you a great Jewish writer, even if a good deed has been done. Moreover, a good deed does not make a good man. And it is moral solipsism to conclude that a good man is a man who has helped *me*. For such reckonings, we need to know more. It is certainly an axiom of the Jewish universe that a *mitzvah ha-ba'ah b'aveyrah*, a commandment that is fulfilled by sinful means, is forbidden.

Since we are considering the matter Judaically, fellow Americans, let us pause also over some of the stringencies of the Jewish laws of charity. Consider this splendid passage from the Talmud: "Rabbi Eliezer ben Jacob said: If a man steals a measure of wheat and grinds it and kneads it and bakes it and sets aside a part of it as *hallah* [the priestly portion that is prescribed by Scripture], how could he utter a blessing over it? He would not be blessing, he would be blaspheming. About such a man the verse [in Psalms] said, 'the grasping man reviles and scorns the Lord.'" So if one steals a measure of wheat and grinds it and kneads it and bakes it and sets aside a part of it to the Israel Cancer Association, and a part of it to the Ein Hod Dada Museum, and a part of it to the Alliance Israelite Universelle, and a part of it to the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies, how can we utter a blessing over it? The origins of one's property are pertinent to the moral status of one's property. This principle was affirmed two millennia later, in New York in 1954. In that year Marc Rich went to work for a commodities brokerage called Phillip Brothers, and in that year Rabbi Moses Feinstein, the most formidable Jewish jurist of the age, received an inquiry from "a student who had resolved in his heart to repent completely." The repentance was for an act of theft, and the conscience-stricken man asked the rabbi to clarify the legal conditions for the restitution of stolen property. Near the end of Feinstein's responsum, he writes: "As for your question whether one may accomplish the restitution of stolen property by returning it in the form of charity, [the answer is that] property stolen from individuals must be returned precisely to the individuals from whom it was stolen ... for it is to them that one is liable ... and one is not acquitted by the donation of this property to charity."

The most remarkable item that I found in Quinn's papers appears in a handwritten list of talking points. They seem to be an inventory of arguments for a pardon composed in preparation for a meeting with Clinton, since they include as shorthand for one of the arguments the words "Ken Starr." And a few lines down the attorney has written: "bias—rich Jew." Jack Quinn's anxiety about the spread of anti-Semitism is very affecting. It is also very cheap. But the cheapness is shared, I fear, by some of my brethren, who seem more and more to believe that no Jew sits in a jail justly. Or to put it differently, that there is only a single reason that a Jew would be sent to jail, and it is the old reason. The welling of Jewish sympathy for Jonathan Pollard is owed in part to such an exploitation of collective memory, to the ancient typological view of Jewish history (every minority has such a view of its history) that there is only one sort of enemy and only one sort of adversity. All this is a deep and ardent expression of solidarity, to be sure; but solidarity is sometimes blinding. It is a simplification of the moral life to let solidarity govern it. Pollard is not Dreyfus, and neither is Rich. Rich did not flee from the Crusaders or the Cossacks or the Nazis; he fled from the SEC and the FBI. Prosecution is not persecution, at least until it is proven to be so. Some things really have changed, O foolish people and unwise.

Leon Wieseltier

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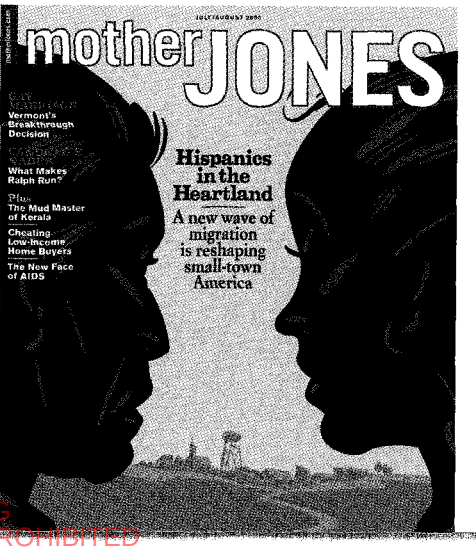
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